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socialist standard

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Journal of The Socialist Party - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Marketing the Mind

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Six Million



Let 2005 rest then, as a monument. A gravestone for the 6 million children the Food and Agriculture Organisations estimates died in the hideous torture of starvation and starvation related disease that year. The FAO report, released on 22 November, also informs us that malnourishment also contributes to holding back educational attainment and brings about a cycle of poverty and death. This in a world where we are embarrassed by riches of food and farmers are paid to let fields fallow.

The figure 6 million is highly evocative - the same number as the usual estimate of Jews that were murdered in The Holocaust - possibly the most heinous act of mass murder in history as these millions were gunned down in pits or gassed in specially built camps for the

extermination of a whole people. A crime of such infamy that its like has never been known and to this day in many parts of the world - as renowned liar David Irving is finding to his cost in Austria - it is considered a crime to deny that it happened.

What historians can and do dispute, though, is the extent to which The Holocaust was planned out in advance - whether Hitler always intended for the mass murder of Jews or whether slaughter grew out of local pragmatic responses to dealing with local populations in conquered territories. The so-called Intentionalist versus Functionalist accounts of The Holocaust.

The debate is complex - and probably irresolvable now. What is,

perhaps, clear, is that the Functionalist case is somehow more horrifying. It would be comforting to human minds to know that a handful of monsters dreamed up and guided the mass-murder from their bunker - but it is more dreadful to conceive of low-level local officials going about their business : Item 5 - Merits of Gas over Bullets for extermination. Literally getting rid of some inconvenient people.

Perhaps, though, in future years, people will look back on the functionalist holocaust of our times - sit agog as they hear of committees sitting down to make policies knowing they will lead to millions of preventable human deaths because they can't, won't, daren't raise the lives of these people above holy private property, the sovereignty of nation states or even God.

The autogenocide of the human race is why 6 million must die each year and why 850 million must live undernourished.

We will be as equally deserving of opprobrium as those who stood by and let the Holocaust happen if we do not act as soon as we may to end this preventable waste. If we lend our voices or our votes to political parties that put trade, business, capital and property before the rational good of distribution according to needs, we are contributing as culpably as the lowliest corporal genocide.

We urgently need to build a worldwide movement to bring a speedy halt to the carnage. The easy thing - the functionalist thing - is to go on supporting parties that offer small, possiblist solutions within the current system. But the right thing to do, the necessary thing, is to demand the impossible and turn the whole system over. Let's make 2006 the monument to the beginning of the end of a murderous system.

Introducing the Socialist Party

Who We Are

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism.

Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal.

We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

What We Do

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and

demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The Next Step

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.



The Tomorrow People

Future society will be populated by very special people. Within their ageless bodies will exist rejuvenated organs cloned from versions of their cells that have been made younger; youthful hearts and youthful lungs that will beat and breathe forever. Beneath their skin will scamper nanobots: blood-cell sized robots which, like highway maintenance vehicles, will rove their bloodstreams destroying pathogens, removing waste, correcting errors in DNA and reversing the ageing process. The same tiny machines will also enable brain-to-brain communication - telepathy of sorts - via the internet and ensure a vast expansion in human intelligence.

Arguably, those special people may become less human as their bodies merge with a technology so advanced that it gradually begins to exceed and replace mere flesh and blood. At least, that's the prediction of Ray Kurzweil, a Massachusetts-based inventor and writer, in his article 'Human 2.0' (*New Scientist*, Sept 24, 2005). As is all too common with techie gurus, he has only the vaguest concept of political realities, so it doesn't occur to him to question whether the future in question will be capitalist or socialist. If Kurzweil even grasped the difference, he probably still wouldn't understand why the question was relevant. He observes certain antiprogressive tendencies in modern society, and ascribes them to some anomalous general human behaviour, rather than class, specifically capitalist class, behaviour. Consequently he proffers dire warnings about what we ought to do with our collective human knowledge, without ever addressing why we, the vast majority, are not in a position to control or determine what is done with that knowledge. Those of us who take an interest in the scientific adventure feel frequently piqued at the tendency of 'futurolgists' like Kursweil, Toffler et al to overlook the fundamental political issues arising from

the fact that human society is class-based. Scientists can be very farsighted but at the same time have only a very narrow field of view, like a blinkered racehorse. Still, given our interest in the implications of science for a future socialist society, his predictions are interesting nonetheless and could be seen as relevant to it.

Ray Kurzweil is a pioneer in the fields of optical character recognition (OCR), text-to-speech synthesis, speech recognition technology, and electronic musical keyboards. He is the author of several books on health, artificial intelligence, transhumanism, and technological singularity. He is also an enthusiastic advocate of using technology to achieve immortality. He predicts that 'we won't experience 100 years of progress in the 21st century-it will be more like 20,000 years of progress' due to exponential rather than linear technological change which will result in the Singularity, 'technological change so rapid and profound it represents a rupture in the fabric of human history' (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

The concept of a singularity, a new technological 'big bang', is an exciting one, and Kurzweil is clearly very taken with it. It is fairly obvious that science does not progress in linear fashion, like a train along a railway, but in geometric fashion, doubling and doubling again. Revolutions in science are almost a weekly event these days, and it is therefore not hard to imagine a 'super-revolution', a point where the whole of human society has to change very suddenly. In a way, a socialist political revolution is almost implicit in such an event, as the fetters and restrictions of outmoded social practices are blown to pieces in a matter of days or weeks by the devastating power of the singularity.

Of course, he could be wrong. There may be no singularity, despite all the indications. Alternatively, the powers that be might be able to prevent or limit it. You don't get rich by giving things away for free. There is every reason to suppose, for example, that nanotechnology, one very likely factor in causing the singularity, will be strictly controlled and limited, a bomb kept in a concrete box.

Tellingly, Kurzweil comments that 'to proscribe such technologies will not only deprive human society of profound benefits, but will drive these technologies underground, which would make the dangers worse' (*New Scientist*, Sept 24, 2005).

It's not difficult to see how the proscriptive tendency of capitalism, governed by the rule of production for profit not need, could put a dampener on Kurzweil's technology-enriched version of humanity. If such technology does come onto the market, to whom will it be available? All of humanity without exception, as Kurzweil perhaps hopes, or only those wealthy enough to afford it? After all, it is likely to be expensive treatment, making its beneficiaries not only economically superior, but genetically superior also. Yet another proscriptive tendency is intellectual property right (see *Patent Absurdity*, and also *Intellectual Property: a further restriction on personal freedom* on page 6 for a fuller discussion of this subject).

Kurzweil likes to define humans as 'the species that seeks - and succeeds - in going beyond our limitations'. But we will really start making some progress when the scientific community succeeds in going beyond its own limitations, and recognising the political dimension of the human project. Many scientists individually seem to understand the restrictive and anti-progressive nature of current practices, but somehow assume that explicit political positions are outside their remit, or even beneath them. In fact, all humans take a political position, whether they admit it or not. Science does not sit in a rarefied world above politics, it is part and parcel of it, and scientists who care about the world's future ought to have the courage and honesty to declare themselves, and stop worrying about peer-group pressure. It's not the professional suicide it once was. If you oppose the restrictive practices of capitalism, then you oppose capitalism. It doesn't take an Einstein or even a Kursweil to work out what that means.



PATENT ABSURDITY

Patent and copyright laws exist to 'protect' their authors and to provide a profit incentive to develop new ideas and technologies, according to the lobby which advocates strengthening patent law. But this lobby generally consists of large companies who have zealously bought up libraries of patents in order to lock out competitors, while the opponents of patent restrictions tend to be small companies unable to get a foot in the door, and who argue that such restrictions hold back development.

Human Genome Sciences of Maryland are well known for patenting much of the human genome, and once tried to patent one of the bacteria that causes meningitis, while Incyte Pharmaceuticals of Palo Alto, California own the patent on *Staphylococcus aureus*, a species whose study is crucial because it is known to evolve resistance to antibiotics (*New Scientist*, May 16, 1998). An independent commission on intellectual property rights reported in 2002 that the World Trade Organisation were strong-arming developing countries into signing intellectual property rights (IPR) agreements which

were of no benefit to them, because they had very little to patent, but instead force up prices and inhibit technology transfer. The report concluded that IPRs effectively rip off poor countries (*New Scientist*, Sept 21, 2002).

The issue of patents is always going to be thorny, because both arguments are correct - in capitalism. Ownership of intellectual property has to be protected in a property owning society, as anyone who has had their house burgled, their car stolen or their idea robbed will tend to agree, but there is no denying that intellectual property rights do indeed stifle innovation

in every field, because of the tendency of patents to concentrate into the hands of the intellectual property rich. The scientific community is divided on the question, between those who believe in knowledge for its own sake and therefore wish to pool ideas, and those who wish to profit personally from their research by denying others access. Since this is precisely the same debate as between socialists and those who support capitalism, one might describe scientists who wish to abolish patent and copyright restrictions as closet socialists.

Kenya Referendum farce

The 21 November referendum conducted by the Electoral Commission of Kenya to vote for or against the proposed new constitution was just a waste of money.

The clamour for a new constitution commenced in earnest with the advent of multi-party politics in the early 90s. Since then it has reached crescendo. Lives have been lost, limbs broken and some of those who have been at the top relegated to the lower levels of society.

During the regime of former president Daniel Arap Moi, short-term political reforms were introduced to keep at bay those clamouring for a new constitution. Mr. Moi succeeded in that he was able to rule for long but, at his departure, left the issue of the constitution unresolved.

With the coming to power of President Mwai Kibaki and his national Rainbow Coalition (NARC), constitution reform was one of the promises given to Kenyans in the 2002 general election campaign. In 2003 a constitutional assembly was instituted at the Bomas of Kenya venue which deliberated on the views collected from Kenyans about the constitution by the Kenya Review Commission in early 2002. The assembly sat for one year.

Its final submissions in early 2004 formed part of what has been argued about. The so-called Bomas draft was viewed as flawed as well as having good contents for the country. Or so those who took part in the deliberations said.

Since the draft which came out of Bomas wasn't agreeable to all, Kenyan MPs met to discuss the contentious issues (on power sharing, devolution and so-called



Above: President Mwai Kibaki. Below: President Daniel Arap Moi



religious courts). It was from their deliberations that a new draft emerged (the so-called Wako draft). The government gave deadlines for the passage of the draft, the final of which was the referendum of 21 November.

Kenyans overwhelmingly rejected the draft, by voting 60 percent against the passage while those for the passage only managed to garner 40 percent of the vote. It's back to the drawing board.

A new constitution or not isn't the panacea for what ails Kenya. The country has only two tribes: the rich and the pathetically poor (though there are 42 ethnic tribes). The rich own factories and employ the labour of the poor, who they exploit to the last sweat. The poor are in the majority but their thinking, lives and even their way of going are controlled by the other tribe.

The new constitution even if it's coated with sweet words will never solve the imbalance in society. It will never make the poor rich. The rich tribe want to use the constitution to perpetuate their hold on the lives of the poor tribe. They have no intention of making any tangible changes in the lives of the other tribe.

And that's why I never support or participate in any activity designed to make a new constitution. I'll only participate in a meaningful activity which is intended to bring a system which has no frontiers, a society in which production is for use not profit, where there are no leaders and where money isn't worshipped.

Only when such a society is established can we say that we've arrived. And arrive we will. ■

PATRICK NDEGE, Nairobi.

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Intellectual Property: a further restriction on personal freedom



Professor Noam Chomsky of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's contribution is based on a Q&A session held on 22 April last year at Washington State University. Tristan Miller provides a commentary from a socialist perspective.

Guaranteeing corporate profits

The relation of intellectual property to personal freedom and its place in public and academic settings is an interesting topic with an interesting history.

The Uruguay Round that set up the World Trade Organization imposed what is called a free trade agreement, but which is, in fact, a highly protectionist agreement (the US and business leaders being strongly opposed to free trade and market economies, except in highly specific ways beneficial to them). A crucial part of this agreement was the establishment of very strong "intellectual property rights". What this actually means is rights that guarantee monopoly pricing power to private tyrannies.

For example, consider a drug corporation. Most of their serious research and development - the hard part of it - is funded by the public. In fact, much of the dynamism of the world's economy comes out of public expenditures through the state system, which is the source of most innovation and development. There is some research and development in the corporate system, but it's mostly at the marketing end. And this is true of the drug industry. Once the corporations gain the benefit of the public paying the costs and taking the risks, they want to monopolize the profit and the intellectual property rights. These rights are not for small inventors. In fact, the people doing the work in the corporations don't get much out of them; at best, they would receive a small bonus if they invent something. It's the corporate tyrannies that are making the profits and they want to guarantee them.

The World Trade Organization proposed new, enhanced intellectual property rights - patent rights - far beyond anything that existed in the past. In fact, they are not only designed to maximize monopoly pricing and profit, but also to prevent development. For instance, the World Trade Organization rules introduced the concept of product patents. It used to be you could patent a process, but not the product, so if some smart guy could figure out a better way of producing something, he could do it. The WTO wants to block this. It's important to block development and progress in order to ensure monopoly rights, so they now have product patents.

Consider US history: suppose the colonies, after independence, had been forced to accept this patent regime. What would we Americans be doing now? First of all, there would be very few of us at all, but those of us who would be here would be pursuing our comparative advantage in exporting fish and fur. That's what economists tell you is right - pursue your

comparative advantage. That was our comparative advantage. We certainly wouldn't have had a textile industry. The British textiles were far cheaper and better. Actually, British textiles were cheaper and better because Britain had crushed Irish and Indian superior textile manufacturers and stolen their techniques. They therefore became the pre-eminent textile manufacturer, by force of course. In actuality, the US does have a textile industry which grew up around Massachusetts. But the only way it could develop was by extremely high tariffs which protected unviable US industries. Our textile industry developed and later had spin-offs into other industries. And so it continues.

We would never have had a steel industry either, for the same reason: British steel was far superior. One of the reasons is because they were stealing Indian techniques. British engineers were going to India to learn about steel-making well into the 19th century. They ran the country by force so they could take what the Indians knew and develop a steel industry. In order to develop its own steel industry, the US used massive government involvement through extremely high tariffs and the military system, as usual.

This system continues right up to the present, and furthermore it's true of every single developed society. It's one of the best-known truths of economic history that the only countries that developed are the ones that pursued these techniques. There were countries that were forced to adopt free trade and "liberalization" - the colonies - and they got destroyed. The sharp divide between the first and the third worlds has really taken shape since the 18th century. And maintaining this divide is what intellectual property rights are for. In fact, there's a name for it in economic history: Friedrich List, the famous German political economist in the 19th century,

who borrowed his major protectionist doctrines from Andrew Hamilton, called it "kicking away the ladder". First you use state power and violence to develop, then you kick away those procedures so that other people can't do it.

Intellectual property rights have very little to do with individual initiative. Einstein didn't have any intellectual property rights on relativity theory. Science and innovation is carried out by people who are interested in it; that's the way science works. However, there's been an effort in very recent years to commercialize it, much the same way everything else has been commercialized. So you don't do science because it's exciting and challenging, because you want to find out something new, and because you want the world to benefit from it; you do it because maybe you can make some money out of it. You can make your own judgment about the moral value. Personally, I think it's extremely cheapening, but also destructive of initiative and development.

It's important to note that the profits from patents commonly don't go back to the individual inventors. This is a very well-studied topic. Take, for example, the well-studied case of computer-controlled machine tools, which are now a fundamental component of the economy. There's a very good study of this by David Noble, a leading political economist. What he discovered is that these techniques were invented by some small guy working in his garage somewhere in, I think, Michigan. After the MIT mechanical engineering department learned about it, they picked up these techniques and developed them and extended them and so on, and the corporations came and picked them up from MIT, and finally it became a core part of US industry. Well, what happened to the guy who invented it? He's still probably working in his garage in Michigan or wherever it is. And that's very typical.

I just don't think intellectual property has much to do with innovation or independence. It has to do with protecting major concentrations of power which mostly got their power as a public gift, and making sure that they can maintain and expand their power. And these highly protectionist devices really have to be rammed down the public's throat. They don't make any economic sense or any other sense.

Neither do I think that intellectual property should play any role in academic and public institutions. In 1980 the Bayh-Dole Act gave universities the right to patent inventions that came out of their own research. But nothing comes strictly out of a university's own research; it comes out of public funding. That's how the university can function; that's how their research projects work. The whole system is set up to socialize cost and risk to the general public, and then within that context, things can be invented. But I don't think universities should patent them. They should be working for the public good, and that means the fruits of their research should be available to the public.

Noam Chomsky

No amount of legislation can change the basics

To most people today, the notion that ideas or information can be owned seems as natural as owning a house or a bicycle. We are brought up to believe that when someone writes a book or piece of music, or develops plans for a new invention, they become that work's sole owner. This means that they alone have the right to determine whether and how that work is used by other people, or the right to transfer ownership of the work to another person or a company. Only the owner is allowed to make and sell copies of the work, to incorporate it into a collection of other works, or to produce a new work based on the original, such as a new edition or a sequel. These "rights", as they are called, are encoded not just in our laws, but increasingly, as we shall see, in our social norms and our technology.

However, the world did not always work this way. To people in the Ancient world and in Mediaeval times, the thought that anyone could claim ownership and control of something intangible like a poem or an idea would have seemed ludicrous. Philosophers and mathematicians regularly borrowed, critiqued, and expanded upon the works of their colleagues; historians compiled and summarized descriptions of events recorded by others; and musicians performed existing songs while adding their own embellishments. Written works were copied freely (albeit laboriously) by trained scribes, and technological improvements diffused gradually among artisans through word of mouth.

To someone from the past, then, today's intellectual property regime would seem terribly restrictive. Had Shakespeare been told he could not copy and rework material from other playwrights, he would have seen this as a tyrannical imposition on his personal freedom as an artist. What's more, we would have been robbed of many of his greatest works, including *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, both of which were adaptations of other authors' plays. What was it that changed, then, between Shakespeare's time and ours, to allow us to think of information and ideas in the same terms as physical property? And more importantly, is our society more or less free as a result?

The answer to the first question is relatively simple when we look at things in their historical context. In the century preceding Shakespeare, two great developments began sweeping across Europe, one technological, the other socio-economical. The first of these was mechanized printing, introduced by Johannes Gutenberg in the 1450s. Books and pamphlets suddenly became easy and cheap to reproduce, and with their abundance literacy and authorship increased. The second development was the capitalist mode of production, which was by fits and starts beginning to replace the old feudal system. Trained scribes who

used their own inexpensive tools for copying manuscripts were replaced by relatively unskilled workers who operated a costly printing press owned by their employer. Few authors could afford a press to print their own books, and the wealthy publishers who owned the presses depended on a steady supply of new literature to drive their sales. Therefore, authors and publishers entered into an agreement whereby the publisher supported the author financially in exchange for printing their book and retaining the profits from its sale.

Though a few popular authors became quite wealthy through this arrangement, the vast majority were not significantly better off than the rest of the labouring class. As with any employment relationship, it was not in the publisher's interest to pay authors any more than required for their upkeep, thus forcing them to either continue writing or seek other employment. To prevent authors from securing payment from more than one publisher simultaneously and to prevent rival publishers from cutting into their profits, publishers in the 17th and 18th centuries pressured governments to enact laws recognizing a publisher's exclusive ownership and control ("copyright") of a literary work. (Initially this ownership rested with the author, though as it was useless to anyone without a press, he invariably assigned it to a publisher.) Similar laws were enacted granting monopolies on "any manner of new manufactures" - that is, patents - which again were beneficial primarily to those who already had the capital to exploit and defend them.

For professional writers, artists, and inventors, then, copyrights and patents - collectively referred to as "intellectual property" - are simply a specialized legal formalization of the wage-labour exchange other workers are forced to make with their employers. Just as manual labourers, lacking the means to produce and distribute their own products, must sell their labour power to a factory owner for an hourly wage, writers, lacking a printing press and bookstore, sell the copyright on their writing to a publishing house for a lump sum or nominal royalty. And just as manual labourers selling their labour power must waive ownership of the goods they have produced and the freedom to use them as they see fit, so too do writers selling their copyright lose the freedom to use their writing as they wishes. If a writer wishes to adapt or incorporate elements of another book - even one that they themselves originally wrote - into a new work, they must first secure (and often pay for) permission from the publisher who owns the copyright. Given that the free and fruitful exchange of ideas and information was commonplace before intellectual property, it is difficult to argue that these laws have done anything other than rob artists and scientists of their personal freedom to learn from and interact with each other.

And what of the rest of us, those of us who do not make our livings writing, performing, or inventing? Has the intellectual property regime affected us in any way? Until relatively recently, the answer was not much, or at least, not



Out-pirated by capitalism?

personally. Intellectual property was simply a legal fiction allowing corporations to stake their various claims to "properties" in the information market. How the capitalists decided amongst themselves who had the right to produce what had little bearing on the individual freedom

of the average worker, who owned neither presses to print books nor factories to mass-produce new machines. Technically it was illegal for a worker to make a copy of a book, but since it would take them weeks or months to do so by hand, the publishers' profits were not threatened and no injunction was sought.

With the advent of home computers and the Internet, however, the entire working class suddenly found itself in possession of the same sorts of instruments of production and distribution that had previously been exclusive to wealthy publishing houses. Once a book or piece of music had been put into digital form, anyone could instantly produce unlimited copies with the click of a button and instantly send them anywhere in the world. Alarmed at the threat to their monopolies

and their profits, publishers began to take notice. Criminal and civil lawsuits were brought against individuals who downloaded music from the Internet or copied software for their friends. Publishers launched wide-scale public "education" campaigns to convince people that unauthorized copying was akin to theft or even to piracy on the high seas. The full force of the law and corporate propaganda apparatus was applied to preventing workers from exercising their new-found ability to produce and distribute intellectual property on a massive scale.

At this point, one could well argue that people technically had not lost any of their personal freedoms, since by law they were never free to copy information in the first place. This changed, as Noam Chomsky notes, with the passing of increasingly restrictive laws in the late 20th century. Now it is a crime not just to copy a digital work, but also to use it in any way not authorized by the publisher. Many of the freedoms people enjoyed with printed books and analogue audio and video recordings no longer apply to their digital counterparts. A publisher can arbitrarily decide that a particular e-book can be read only a certain number of times, or only up to a certain date, or only on a certain device, making transfer to a friend or donation to a library impossible. These restrictions are hard-coded into the device or software which reads the e-book, and modifying the software or inventing a new device to circumvent these restrictions is a criminal offence.

In conclusion, Prof. Chomsky is correct in his identification of today's intellectual property system as a way of granting legal monopolies to corporations. And I applaud him for speaking out against the worst excesses of companies exploiting the patent system in the name of maximizing profits. But by focussing on and attacking only recent intellectual property law reforms, it is easy to fall into the trap of suggesting that the system could be "fixed" simply by repealing these reforms or otherwise tweaking the laws. As I hope I have shown here, from their very beginnings copyrights and patents have existed to benefit only that small minority of people who owned the presses, warehouses, and stores through which books and other media are reproduced and distributed. Any benefit to the inventors and authors who actually produce inventions and artistic works is incidental, and furthermore comes at the cost of stifling cross-pollination of ideas and the progress it entails. No amount of legislation can ever change the fundamental relationship in production between the workers, who produce almost all of the world's artistic and scientific wealth, and the rich minority who control the means of disseminating this wealth. Therefore workers have no stake in the intellectual property regime and should work only for the abolition of the entire system that supports it. ■

Tristan Miller



Cooking the Books (1)

Value added, but who by?

Sir Digby Jones, director-general of the employers' organisation, the CBI, has his own economic theory.

Interviewed in the *Times* law section (22 November) he expounded his view that British capitalism could no longer rely on just producing "commodity" goods which "sell only on price" (by which he seems to have meant basic material goods), but should switch to "value-added" services. Britain, he argued, cannot compete with countries such as India and China in producing cheap "commodity goods", but should let these countries make money from doing this which they could then spend on buying "value-added" services from Britain.

But what does he mean by "value-added"? In Marxian economics it would mean the new value added by labour in the process of production to the previously existing value of the raw and other materials. And which is divided into wages (the replacement value of the workers' mental and physical energies used up in production) and surplus value (which goes to the capitalist employer and is the source of profit).

In a talk to businesspeople in Birmingham last April, he did make a little clearer what he meant. There were "fewer and fewer widget makers in the region", he said, "but we are creating more and more work in the higher value, quality, branded sector". And he gave an

example. We should not be worried, he said,

"if we went into Tesco to buy a Harry Potter toy for £10 to discover it had been Made in China. Because of that £10 just £1 ends up in China. The rest stays in Britain via the likes of licensing and intellectual property rights, advertising, copywriting and marketing" (*Birmingham Post*, 27 April).

But neither advertising, nor copywriting, nor marketing add any value since there are concerned with selling not producing goods, while licensing and intellectual property rights are claims on profits, i.e. on value produced elsewhere.

So where does the £9, which Digby Jones calls value-added and which is the source of the income of the advertising agencies, etc. come from?

The workers in China who made the toy (and the transport workers who transported it to Britain) added a value of between £9 and £10 to the value of the materials from which the toys were made, out of which they received well under £1 (since the cost of the materials and the profits of their employers also had to come out of the £1 that ended up in China). The Chinese capitalists who exploited them had to pay licensing and intellectual property right fees to firms in Britain, which swallowed up a part of the surplus value they had extracted from their workers.

If they had had the facilities to

advertise and market the toys they could have done this themselves and kept more of the surplus value. But, not being in this position, they had to sell the toys below their value - well below their value, it seems - to a whole series of go-betweens (advertisers, marketing consultants and the like) who each took a share of the added value, the last one (Tesco) selling it at its full value of £10 to the final consumer.

So, what Sir Digby calls "value-added" is rather "value-realised". It is not the capitalists with money invested in advertising, marketing and other activities to do with selling who add new value to the goods made in China or India. It was added by the workers there, but sold below its value by their immediate employer to selling capitalists in Britain.

In capitalist terms, Sir Digby's strategy for British capitalism could make sense: within a global division of labour, China, India and others produce the material goods and Britain and others sell them. But, if his figures for the Chinese toys are right, what a condemnation of capitalism: nine-tenths of the selling price of a good made up of non-productive on-costs to do with selling and only one-tenth with actual production! If that's the figure for all goods, socialism - where goods would not need to be sold but would be free for people to take - would have no problem producing enough for everybody, in China and India as well as in Europe and North America.



Sir Digby Jones

Why Socialists aren't part of the Left

When someone comes across the Socialist Party for the first time, a common reaction is to consider us as just another left-wing political organisation. From one point of view this is not surprising, as the left use similar terminology to us, talking of Socialism, class struggle, exploitation, etc, and invoking Karl Marx. But digging a little deeper will show that our political position is very different from that of the left. By 'the left' we mean the Socialist Workers Party, the Workers Revolutionary Party, the Socialist Labour Party, all the groups with a name that's a variation on Communist Party, Militant (dishonestly using the name 'Socialist Party'), and the Scottish Socialist Party, among others. All quotations in this article are taken from the websites of the organisations referred to.

The first difference is that of our aims, the kind of society we wish to see established. Socialists are quite clear and uncompromising on this - our aim is a society without wages, money, countries or governments, based on common ownership of the means of production (land, factories, offices, etc.). Production would be for use, not profit, and there would be free access to what had been produced. The result is quite simple: no poverty, no homelessness, no starvation, no war. Such a society would be fully democratic, with no ruling class or vested interests.

Do the left stand for this kind of society? The simple answer is No. Militant, for instance, say they wish to 'take into public ownership the top 150 companies, banks and building societies that dominate the economy, under democratic working-class control and management.' Forget the rhetoric about democratic control - this is a recipe for state-run capitalism. Socialism, as a moneyless society, will have no need for banks or building societies. In general, in fact, the left stand for a version of capitalism where the state is the main employer. This makes no difference to members of the working class, who still have to work for wages, but will now be exploited by the state and those who run it rather than by private capitalists. The left are admirers of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, which ushered in over 70 years of state capitalism and a police state. They differ on when and why they think things 'went wrong' in Russia, but they all support the regime established in 1917.

It's true that there are minor variations on the theme of state-run capitalism. The SSP, for instance, advocates 'the break-up of the British state and the creation of a free Scottish socialist republic.' But a single Socialist country in a hostile capitalist world is just impossible, and this quote just reveals that the SSP aim

is state capitalism - Scottish state capitalism. Many of the left are in fact nationalistic in one way or another.

It is also true that some left-wing organisations pay lip service to the idea of a moneyless society. The CPGB, for example, refers to 'communism - a system which knows neither war, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations.' But, like the rest of the left, this is for them a paper aim that bears no relation to their everyday activity or the ideas set out in their publications. They make no effort to explain how Socialist/Communist society would work, and no effort to convince workers of the advantages of such a way of organising things. Instead they combine

reforms can tip over into revolution.

Battles for reforms are vital preparation for social revolution' (SWP). But no evidence is offered for such a position, and the task of revolutionaries is not to jump on the bandwagon of reforms but to expose their inadequacies, to show that reforms cannot solve working-class problems. Indeed, some left-wing groups deliberately and dishonestly go for short-term aims that they know cannot be met under capitalism, as a way of fuelling working-class discontent. In other words, they deliberately lie to workers as a way of getting them into their party!

Lastly, Socialists differ from the left in our attitude to leadership and democracy. Socialism will be democratic, with all having an equal say in how things are run; it follows that the movement for Socialism must be democratic too. The Socialist Party has no leaders and is run by its membership. We have an executive committee, elected each year by ballot of the members; their role is not to make policy but to administer the Party in accordance with decisions made by members.

The left, however, adopt a Leninist view and support leadership: they see themselves as leaders of the working class, and are organised internally with a division between an inner circle of leaders and 'ordinary' members. For instance, they see the need for 'authoritative and influential

leaders who have been steeled over a long period of time' (CPGB). Most left-wing groups do not operate as cults (see the November *Socialist Standard*), but they still have a distinction between rank-and-file members and the leadership. They are often rather coy about their role as would-be leaders, but as Leninists they all support the idea of a vanguard. A leadership-based organisation is not going to be any use in establishing an egalitarian society without leaders. But, as we've said, that's not what the left aim for anyway.

The left, then, stand for state-run capitalism rather than Socialism; they advocate reforms rather than revolution; they are in favour of leadership rather than democracy. The Socialist Party, in contrast, does not aim at reforming capitalism but at replacing it by a new democratic way of organising the world, Socialism, brought about by a revolution, and we do not see ourselves as leaders. It should be clear that the Socialist Party is quite unlike the left wing, and that we are definitely and for good reason not part of the left. ■

Paul Bennett



Scottish Socialist Party



a set of immediate demands with the aim of a so-called proletarian dictatorship, which in reality means state-run capitalism.

This takes us on to a further point. In spite of all their revolutionary posturing and calls for a fundamental change in society, the left actually devote their time to chasing reforms of capitalism. If you look at the programmes or manifestos of left-wing parties, you will find them full of reforms of a wide variety of types. A random list of examples: 'Right to retirement from age 60 for all workers' (CPGB); 'a Scottish Service Tax - a fair alternative to the council tax that will make the rich pay their share' (SSP); 'An immediate 50% increase in the pension as a step towards a living pension for all pensioners' (Militant); 'Renationalise the railways' (WRP).

The left generally draw a distinction between 'immediate demands' such as those just listed and longer-term goals. We've already seen that the longer-term goals in any case involve a continuation of capitalism, but they are usually given second place to the short-term demands. The justification normally provided is that fighting on the immediate demands will win workers over to the longer-term ideas of the organisation. 'The struggle for

Catholicism in Disgrace



In Canada, the United States, Australia and elsewhere, but especially in Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church stands in disgrace, following the plethora of revelations about the activities of paedophiles and other types of abusers among its clergy. Obviously the structure of the Church and the often uncanny power its priests and bishops have over a subservient laity must make it a target for paedophiles and sadists. But the real and utterly appalling shame of the Church was its subsequent treatment of the abused and its frenetic efforts to cover up by lies and other deceits the contemptible behaviour of its servants.

Was it purely coincidence that the greatest abuse outside Ireland took place in Canada, the US and Australia, in mainly Irish Catholic areas and under the tutelage of the Irish Christian Brothers and Irish priests? Here we look at the historic role of Catholic priests and of Catholic institutions in Ireland over the centuries and for the source of the awesome power and the cavalier attitude of a now-disgraced Church.

The Roman Catholic Church (and, to a lesser extent, its Christian derivatives) arrogated onto itself the role of arbiter in things appertaining not only to matters of what it called 'morality' but to all forms of human behaviour and even juridical practice. Canon Law was the ultimate determinant superior to all other legal forms.

As feudalism yielded to capitalism in Europe and modern nation states were freed from the political hegemony of the so-called Holy Roman Empire, the Popes and their cardinals were forced to concede to widening democratic forms which were historically anathema to Rome. Still, even in countries where Roman Catholicism had been politically and morally overshadowed by various forms of Protestantism, different Popes cautioned against democratic concessions to the people.

According to Pope Leo XIII (Encyclical, *Immortale Dei* 'On the Christian Constitution of States', November 1885) canon law is effectively superior to the civil law, having derived from Jesus Christ through Peter and the apostles to the Church:

"In very truth, Jesus Christ gave his apostles unrestrained authority in sacred matters together with the genuine and most true power of making laws, as also with the duplex right of judging and punishing which flow from that power."

By then, of course, such nonsense was a fatuous Popish aspiration which was in conflict with the material conditions of life in most of Europe. The power to make and enforce laws and the right and the power to punish in pursuit of such laws was now in

the possession of the bourgeoisie and its god was profit.

Ireland

Ireland nestled on the western flank of Europe, its natural development frustrated by its proximity to its powerful neighbour, England. According to legend, Ireland had been Christianised by St Patrick in the fifth century AD but, as in many other places, the Christian proselytizer appeared to have fashioned the new faith to suit the territory, or the native Celtic tribes adjusted it to suit their customs. Druidic Ireland might have accepted the Christian God but it did not give up its Druidic ways nor did it submit to the authority of Rome.

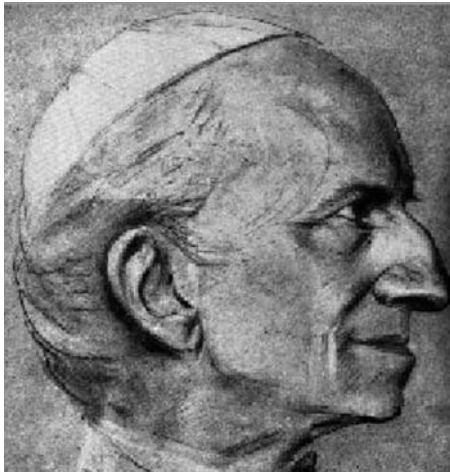
Effectively, the Celtic Christian Church was set within the organisational norms of the clan system. Each clan elected its own bishops and priests, which meant that there were a great number of clan-nominated bishops whose episcopal authority was the writ and the power of the clan.

Eventually in the 12th century Pope Adrian IV in a bull *Laudabiliter* gave authority to King Henry II of England to invade Ireland and "enlarge the bounds of the Christian faith to the ignorant and rude and to extirpate the roots of vice from the field of the Lord". In the "Lord's Field", as perceived by Rome, the easy moral attitudes and forms of social organisation enjoyed by the Irish were proscribed and as the historian P. Beresford Ellis points out, "The Irish clergy had embraced feudalism (the social system underpinning Roman Catholicism) a system repugnant to the ordinary Irishman long before it was

enforced in Ireland". Whatever the wishes of the Church, the de facto imposition of feudalism in Ireland would take another five torturous centuries.

Outside that area of Leinster, known as "The Pale", on the eastern side of Ireland, the native Irish clans resisted the incursion of English authority. Initially, within the Pale bishops and abbots, in accordance with the feudal system, became barons under the crown but later Anglo-Norman clerics were rewarded with appointments to Irish livings - inevitably to the chagrin of the native clergy.

In the centuries that followed ownership of land and other forms of property were increasingly denied to the native Irish. But England was still a Catholic country and thus priests and bishops in Ireland, while being denied the more influential positions within the



Above: Pope Leo XIII. Right: The Pale

Church, did not suffer any other forms of proscription from the government. Outside the Pale the power of the priest and the Church within the atrophying world of the clans prospered, especially within the province of education.

The war of the two kings

It is argued that it was this 'prospering', the strength of the Church and its priests in Ireland, that withstood the force of the Reformation when England became Protestant. Certainly, after the Reformation, and especially after the defeat of the English Catholic Stuart, King James II, in 1691, the Catholic Church and its priests were to suffer legal proscription and vicious persecution. Ironically, James's defeat in Ireland was at the hands of the Central European powers organised under the terms of the Treaty of Augsburg, and the commander of the victorious forces was William, Prince of Orange, James's Protestant son-in-law - the famous King Billy, who, despite the subsequent persecution of Presbyterians as well as Catholics by his government is immortalised in the folk memory of Ulster loyalists.

This persecution of Irish

Protestantism's largest denomination as well as Catholics 'and other dissenters' was the result of the Establishment of the Episcopalian Church, which made the practice of other religions illegal and subject to severe penalties, including confiscation of property. Later, in 1719 Parliament

passed an Act of Toleration granting relief from the Penal Laws to Presbyterians but the Act made no concessions to Catholics. In the years following the formalisation of laws against the Catholic Church and its members some 5,000 Catholics became Anglicans, but the overwhelming majority of the native Irish were mere 'tenants-at-will' on smallholdings without either security of tenure or fixity of rents; in fact they were outlaws in the land of their birth.

It was in such conditions that the Catholic Church and its priests, not always speaking with the one voice, gained overwhelming influence over the minds of the people. All forms of agrarian unrest, inevitable under persecution, were roundly condemned by the Church. But the priests were close to the people, their only articulate ally and, almost in spite of the contempt of the hierarchy for the peasantry, their influence over the minds of the people became more telling. The English government was a brutal foreign power visibly persecuting priest and people. Inevitably the Church, in the form of its priests, became the powerful institutional stabilising factor in the bitter lives of an inarticulate, harassed and brutalised people.

Excommunicated IRA members

The Catholic Emancipation Bill of 1829 gave formal legal recognition to the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland; by then the power of the Church and its religious fraternities was awesome. It wasn't only in matters of birth, marriage and death that the power of the church was evident; almost every sort of activity, business, political or sporting had the ubiquitous priest and in the



structure and content of education the power of the Church was paramount.

As the Church-supported Irish National Party fell into decay before the burgeoning power of Sinn Féin after 1905, clerical influence was transferred to the latter party though the official organ of Irish Catholicism condemned the Republican Rising of 1916 as 'an act of brigandage' and supported the British execution of the rebel leadership. Similarly, during the subsequent guerrilla war (1919-22) the Church condemned the IRA and excommunicated its members, but in the main the old priestly stalwarts were there to lend support and comfort - and, perhaps, save the Church from its own error of judgement.

The guerrilla war ended with a British government-enforced partitioning of Ireland

into Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State. For the zealots and bigots of Catholicism and Protestantism it seemed a red-letter day, for it lent to each in their respective areas virtually untrammelled political and social influence.

In the north the political agents of the linen lords and the industrial capitalists declared that they had a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people, while the Protestant churches cosied up to a system of sectarian discrimination designed to hurt workers who were Catholics and fool workers who were Protestants into believing that their slums and their miserable life styles made them superior to their even more miserable class brethren.

Surrender

In the south, all the political parties surrendered to the arrogance and deceptions of the Catholic Church and its institutions. The minds of the young were given over to priests, nuns and Christian Brothers for an 'education' unquestionably based on a morbid, insular Catholicism. As if that was not bad enough, as we now know, in many of the institutions run by Catholic religious orders children were being physically and sexually abused and the Church was tolerating this abuse.

The scandal of the Magdalene laundries, which was highlighted by BBC, ITV and to its credit RTE, demonstrated the quite remarkable power the priests had over an acutely educationally deprived people. The laundries were operated by the Sisters of Mercy (sic!) who brutally exploited slave labour to carry out their function. The slaves were young women who had been abandoned in pregnancy, or who showed promise of behaviour alien to the views of their families. In many cases a priest requested or persuaded a child's parents to abandon their child to these institutes of brutality and slavery for 'the good of the child's soul'. One old woman who had only been released in the late sixties from this dreadful servitude told a television audience how the priest had approached her parents when she was young and advised them that their daughter's good looks could "present an occasion for sin".

When a young doctor who in his practice had experienced the ravages of tuberculosis became Minister of Health in the Coalition government of 1948 he promulgated a Bill to give free medical care to expectant mothers and children under the age of five. The Catholic Archbishop of Dublin wrote to the then Taoiseach complaining that such state interference could not be tolerated in a Catholic country. In France, Italy or any other Catholic country such absurd temerity would have been laughed at; in Catholic Ireland both the Bill and its political sponsor were dropped.

But the bishops could not control the airwaves nor could they control Irish capitalism's demand for widening of the education curriculum. Irish Television still placates the bishops with a silence for the Angelus; it is an acknowledged embarrassment but as in all other countries the value-system and vulgarities of global capitalism's unitary culture overshadows the morbid doctrines of the Church and sometimes even exposes its institutions for the moral cesspits they are. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE



Richard Hamilton's pop art critique of contemporary consumer society "Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?"

isn't true in that it assumes that the economy responds to consumer demand, whereas in fact it responds to changes in the rate of profit, while most people's "demand" is limited by the size of their wage packet or salary cheque.

That capitalism is not the most efficient way of providing for people's material needs - and that socialism as a system of common ownership, democratic control and production just for use would do this much better - is the traditional socialist case against capitalism. And it retains all its validity. But, after the last World War, in the 50s and 60s capitalism in North America and Western Europe appeared to live up to its promise of material prosperity for most people through the emergence of the so-called "consumer society". But then another, different criticism of capitalism appeared: that while it might have solved more or less adequately the problem of "bread", of dire material want, for most people in these parts of the world, it had still not created a satisfactory society.

Books began to appear in America with such titles as *The Lonely Crowd*, *The Organization Man*, *The Hidden Persuaders*, *The Waste Makers*, *One-Dimensional Man*, all critical of various aspects of the "consumer society" as a society in which people were encouraged to regard the acquisition of more and more consumer goods as the main aim in life. In Europe, such criticism took on a more explicitly anti-capitalist form. In France the critical books bore such titles as *A Critique of Everyday Life* and the *Society of the Spectacle*. The argument was that in the "consumer society" (called instead, more accurately in fact, "commodity society") the logic of buying something to passively consume had spread from the purchase of material goods to other aspects of everyday life - to how people spent their leisure time and to how they related to each other.

This type of criticism added another dimension to the socialist case against capitalism: that it not only failed to organise the satisfaction of material needs properly but that it also degraded - dehumanised - the "quality of life".

It's not clear to whom the credit for developing this "cultural criticism" of capitalism should go. The Frankfurt School of Marxism (Fromm, Marcuse and others), the Situationists, even radical journalists in America like Vance Packard, would be among the candidates. In any event they were all working on the basis of the observable fact of the degrading effect capitalism was having on the *quality* of everyday life by spreading commercial values more and more widely.

It's a powerful criticism of capitalism. Perhaps even these days, in this part of the world, a more powerful criticism than the traditional socialist one that capitalism brings material poverty to most people. Certainly, on a world scale, there are hundreds of millions in dire material poverty. And there are few millions in this country - around 15 percent of the population - who are materially deprived. But we can't say this of the majority of the population here. Most people in Britain don't have a problem about getting three meals a day, decent clothes, heating, don't

Capitalism and the quality of life

Capitalism is a society where nearly all the things that humans need or want are articles of commerce, things made to be bought and sold. This is not a complete definition since under capitalism one thing in particular becomes a commodity - the human ability to work and to create things, what Marx called "labour power" - and this is in fact the defining feature of capitalism. It's a commodity society in which labour-power is a commodity.

This has two consequences. The first is that there is not simply production for sale but production for profit. And secondly, most things that humans need or want tend to become commodities, i.e. have to be bought. It is not difficult to see why. The wages system means that most people are dependent, for satisfying their needs, on the money they are paid for the sale of the one saleable commodity they do possess (their labour power), money which they then use to buy what they must have to live. So the "commodification" of labour power means

the commodification of food, of clothes, of accommodation, and of other, less material wants too.

One of the things that the spread of capitalism meant, in concrete terms, was the spread of money-commodity relations. It's a process that's still going on in parts of the world and which even conventional economists speak of as integrating formerly largely self-sufficient subsistence farmers in Asia, Africa and Latin America into the "money economy".

What we are talking about here is the commodification of people's material needs. Some people might not find this objectionable. Some even find it a progressive, even a liberating development. In fact this is one of the standard defences of capitalism - that the money economy gives people the freedom to choose what to consume by how they spend their money and that this is the most efficient way of organising the satisfaction of people's material needs and wants. Of course this



Above: Marcuse. Right: Fromm

have to go to the pawnbrokers or live in vermin-invested rooms. In fact, the commodification of the "wants of the mind" is based on the fact that most people have money to spend on satisfying wants over and above those of "the stomach". If people didn't have this discretionary purchasing power after having satisfied their material needs, then there would be no market for cultural and entertainment products for capitalism to stimulate, manipulate and exploit. (As to why people have this "extra" money to spend on entertainment, it will have something to do with increased intensity and stress at work requiring more relaxation - more escapism - for people to recreate their particular ability to work.)

The criticism of "consumer society" was not just that it represented the invasion and colonisation of every aspect of social life by money-commodity relations, but that it also encouraged passive consumption rather than active participation. There is a great deal of validity in this point - that the "consumer society" is one where, sometimes literally, people sit in armchairs

watching the passing show provided for them. This is a criticism of people's lack of participation is shaping their lives, a lack that was also reflected politically where "democracy" is conceived of as merely choosing every four or five years between rival would-be elites (using in fact marketing techniques to attract support). Instead of people making their own sport or their own entertainment - or politics - they consume them as a pre-packaged commodity.

There must be something wrong with a society in which, instead of people living their own lives and interacting with their neighbours in a human way, they sit in front of a screen watching actors perform artificial scenes based on exaggerations of everyday life and identifying with the fictitious characters in these programmes. And in which the most widely-read newspapers don't discuss real events so much as the artificial ones portrayed in these programmes and the lives and loves of the leading actors who play in them - as well as those of other so-called "celebrities" from the world of sport and entertainment.

As long as capitalism lasts, the quality of life will continue to decline. There's nothing that can be done to stop this within the context of capitalism as it is due to capitalism, representing, as it does, the dissolving effects on society of the spread of money-commodity relations into all aspects of life. So, despite the slow, but undeniable increase in material living standards in certain parts of the world the case for socialism as a non-commercial society in which human welfare and human values will be the guiding

principle retains all its relevance. With the common ownership of the means of life, there could and would be production directly to satisfy human needs and wants and not for sale with a view to profit - the death of the commodity, the end of what William Morris called "commercial society" - and a classless community with a genuinely common interest in which humans can relate to each other as human beings and not as social atoms colliding with each other on the market-place as commodity buyers and sellers. ■

ADAM BUICK



Cooking the Books (2)

The Property Rights Act

When Labour got back into office in 1997, one of

the first things they did, to show without spending any money that they were reformers, was to sign up to the European Convention on Human Rights. This was supposed to give people more legal "rights". Actually, as infringements could give rise to monetary compensation, it was more a bonanza for lawyers and has resulted in the further spread of "compensation culture", capitalism's tendency to put a monetary value on everything.

But it has also had another effect: to entrench further the rights of property, as two recent legal cases have shown (*Times*, 18 April and 23 November). Before the entry into force of the 1998 Human Rights Act, "squatters" acquired a legal right

to a property after occupying it unchallenged for at least 12 years.

The cases involved property companies which had acquired titles to land which had been squatted by farmers for more than the 12 years. The companies relied on an article of the Convention that states: "Every natural person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided by law."

The judges in both cases (the second those of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasburg from which there is no appeal) ruled that the previous English law that allowed the farmers to assume ownership of the land was an infringement of the property companies' rights as enshrined in the Convention. As a result they will receive as compensation a nice fat cheque, likely to run in one case to millions of pounds.

So-called "human rights" have always been linked to

property rights. As C.B. Macpherson showed in his classic study of 16th and 17th English political philosophy, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, the whole concept of human rights was based on the idea of every human being having a property right to their own body. The state is not supposed to stop them using their mental and physical energies as they think fit; this involves not just freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, but also the freedom to exercise their mental faculties in speech, publication and religion.

Property as such came to be regarded as a human right when it was argued that humans also had a right to what they themselves had got from nature by their own bodily efforts, i.e. by their own labour. However, given the existing unequal ownership of property, especially land, the bourgeois "theorists" of possessive individualism shied away from the egalitarian implications of this labour theory of property. Instead they came up with various more or less

specious reasons as to why property, however acquired (and including land, which no one created by their labour, and even slaves), was, in the words of the French Revolution's 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, "an inviolable and sacred right".

The freedom of property-owners from arbitrary dispossession by the state was what the French Revolution established in France, but which the so-called Glorious Revolution in England in 1688 and the US Constitution had already established in these countries.

The European Convention of Human Rights is a direct descendant of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man, itself a reflection of the theory of "possessive individualism". It is essentially a Convention on the Rights of Property - as neatly illustrated by the fact that the article under which the property companies won was not some obscure subsection, but Article I of Protocol I entitled "Protection of Property".

When the truth hurts

How open is 'open government'? John Bissett looks at the Freedom of Information Act and the cover-up over American plans to bomb Al Jazeera.



Under a section headed 'Open Government', The Labour Party election manifesto of 1997 declared how "Unnecessary secrecy in government leads to arrogance in government and defective policy decisions". It made reference to the Scott Report on weapons sales to Iraq under the Conservative Party and pledged that Labour would fight for a Freedom of Information Act and more open government. Many voters were highly impressed with New Labour's alleged crusade for accountability and gave them their full support at the election.

In December of that year Tony Blair proudly revealed the White Paper Your Right to Know: The Government's Proposals for a Freedom of Information Act. The document advocated "establishing a general right of access to official records and information", and stated this would lead to more open and accountable government.

The much awaited Freedom of Information Act received Royal Assent on 30 November 2000 and was brought fully into force in January 2005. In June a report by the Department for Constitutional Affairs, which assessed the first three months of the new Act, found that Ministers and Whitehall bureaucrats were failing to open up the government and disclose information punctually to the public as previously pledged. The report showed that Whitehall departments had not revealed all the information asked for by the public in half of all cases and that there had been hold-ups in a third of all requests.

Maurice Frankel, director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, said in the Guardian (24 June) that some departments had been so bad that "in any other field, the

government would be sending in a hit squad to take the functions over from them because they couldn't do the job". Pointing particularly at the Home Office, he continued: "The legislation seems to have passed them by. They are living in a time warp."

In July, with Blair gearing up for his G8 meeting in Gleneagles, the government decided to release more than 500 documents requested under the Freedom of Information Act - previously blocked documents produced by the Strategy Unit under Lord Birt, a Blair adviser. However, the government chose to release them on the Friday evening of the Live 8 events around the country, in the full knowledge that the weekend press would focus so much on the Live 8 concerts they'd have little concern for anything else.

On 22 November the Daily Mirror printed a report, headed "Bush plot to bomb his Arab ally", which referred to a leaked 5-page government memo contending that US President George Bush considered bombing Al Jazeera's headquarters in Qatar and was talked out of it by Blair. Readers eagerly awaited further revelations and wondered how the government would react to the disclosure. But did the Blair government greet the openness that such an enquiry could bring and comply with requests for further information on the matter? Not on your nelly! The government rather had the attorney general, Lord Goldsmith, threaten the Mirror and other newspapers with the Official Secrets Act, elevating the disclosure of any further information to a treasonable offence.

It is somewhat ironic that a government, which had blatantly and dramatically lied to the British public over Iraq's WMDs in an attempt to get them to support a war in Iraq, a war which was presented as being very much in our interests, should now be saying that disclosure of the memo was not in the national interest. After all, such an attack on Al Jazeera's Qatar base could have resulted in retaliation against the British public at home and abroad.

And it was not as if the USA had not already set a precedent in attacking Al Jazeera offices. During the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, a US 'smart bomb' hit their Kabul offices. Two years later, in April 2003, the war in Iraq in full swing, their Baghdad office was hit by a missile. In the latter incident not

only had Al Jazeera provided the Pentagon with its co-ordinates, fearing another 'mistaken' attack, but witnesses in the area saw the plane fly twice over the building before it was hit. That same day the Baghdad office of Abu Dhabi TV was also hit.

What possible motive could the US have had for wishing to bomb Al Jazeera? Well, Al Jazeera is based in Qatar, a country considered a US ally and its staff are gleaned from all around the world, even Britain, so there can be little question of the TV station being considered an enemy. Al Jazeera's only agenda is to report the news to an audience of 50 million and in a difficult climate. When the TV station first began broadcasting it won much acclaim in the US. The New York Times eulogized it as a "beacon of freedom" and White House officials saw it as living testimony that the Arab world wanted democracy and freedom of speech. But then the US top brass realised that Al Jazeera has a 'tell it like it is' method of reporting; that it was not going to bury the truth like so many western TV stations. It began reporting in gruesome detail what it saw, so much so that it has a nifty sideline in selling footage to foreign TV companies. Moreover, it aired the alleged Osama bin Laden video tapes to the Arab world. Clearly the TV station was becoming something of a "turbulent priest" that the kings of oil wanted rid of.

When, in 2003, Paul Wolfowitz, the US Deputy Defence Secretary claimed Al Jazeera was "endangering the lives of US troops", it was Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense who upped hostility to the TV station by falsely claiming it was collaborating with Iraqi insurgents. At the behest of their US puppet-masters, the newly elected Iraqi government had Al Jazeera temporarily thrown out of the country.

Back in June of 2005, Donald Rumsfeld further complained about Al Jazeera tarnishing the good old US image "day after day". When US forces launched a massive and merciless assault on the Iraqi city of Fallujah, stopping all men of military age from leaving the city



Wolfowitz: "Al Jazeera endangering the lives of US troops" and Rumsfeld: "Al Jazeera collaborating with Iraqi insurgents."



"If the people knew what we had done, they would chase us down the street and lynch us." George Bush Snr.

before the attack and with many hundreds of civilians dying in the consequent napalm bombardment, Rumsfeld commented on Al Jazeera's coverage of the atrocity: "I can definitely say that what Al Jazeera is doing is vicious, inaccurate and inexcusable."

George Orwell once said: "during times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act." Well, events before and since the invasion of Iraq have revealed we certainly live in times of universal deceit, so maybe Bush wanted Al Jazeera knocked out for its revolutionary act of telling the truth about the occupation of Iraq.

In prosecuting the former Cabinet Official David Keogh along with Leo O'Connor, a researcher to the former Labour MP, Tony Clarke, over the leaked memo, and in threatening the media with the Official Secrets Act, the government is guilty of the **Socialist Standard** January 2006

same crime that the story focused on - namely that of attempting to strangle the truth. Blair, on the one hand, allegedly advises Bush that it would not be wise to bomb Al Jazeera, who would have been bombed because they reveal the truth which the US finds harmful. Yet Blair clamps down on all attempts to bring the circumstances surrounding the memo to public attention, because to do so would likewise harm Bush.

George Orwell left us with another memorable quote: "He who controls the present, controls the past. He who controls the past, controls the future." This is exactly what New Labour, indeed the Bush-Blair bandwagon, is all about - controlling the future via their control of the present and what information is available to us and in the interests of their own backers. The Labour government ceases to be "open to scrutiny" and accountable to the people and instead becomes the puppet of US foreign policy its detractors always claimed it to be, losing what trust supporters might have had in it.

Of course none of the above should come as a surprise to the well informed, who are highly attuned to the Machiavellian goings-on of the executive of big business, namely governments. Few governments rule by force nowadays; most rule by consent, a consent granted by a misinformed and constantly lied-to public. Were governments really open with the truth, they would live as long as it would take the masses to tie

their metaphorical nooses. Indeed, it was George Bush Snr who once said: "If the people knew what we had done, they would chase us down the street and lynch us."

One thing that the Socialist Party can pride itself on is its openness. We have no secrets; nothing we say or do is said or done behind closed doors, away from public scrutiny. Our EC meetings, Conferences and Delegate Meetings are always open to the public and there is nothing stopping members of the public speaking at the same. Moreover, all of the reports of these meetings are available for scrutiny, even posted on the Web. And there are reasons for this - not only do we believe in accountability and feel it important to win the trust and respect of our fellow workers, we further envisage socialist society to be free, open and democratic, with all delegates wholly accountable to the people who elect them, so it makes sense that an organisation advocating such a society should hold its own democratic procedures up as a model.

And as advocates of democracy, free speech and accountability, we will be closely watching the trial of David Keogh and Leo O'Connor at Bow Street Magistrates Court on 10 January, though without much hope that this case will result in a triumph in the cause of government accountability. For Blair and Bush there is just too much at stake - the truth.

■ John Bissett

Working till we drop

The motto of the ancient Roman slave owners was that slaves should work, or sleep.

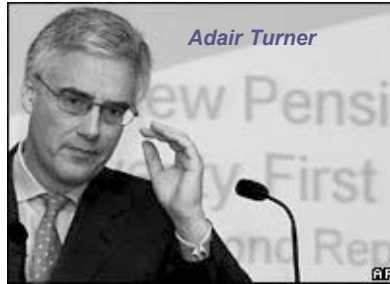
It seems the modern capitalists' version of that term is that wage slaves must work till they drop. In November last year the media was filled with furore over the publication of the Turner Report onto the future of the pension system - calling for the retirement age to be increased from 65 to 68 by 2050.

The proposals in the report appear to try and be balanced, playing off the increase in retirement age with an end to means-testing, restoring the link between pensions and earnings (so that pensions will rise with wages and thus be a more secure hedge against inflation) and compelling employers to contribute towards individual pensions of employees. It also proposed that individuals should be encouraged and facilitated in providing a personal pension for themselves. Essentially, the report seeks to spread the burden of the ageing population among all concerned parties. Turner himself told the BBC: "Unless we want the state pension to get meaner and meaner we either have to have higher tax or a higher state pension age, we have decided on both."

That's how it is presented in the media, that is. We are all getting older, and so pensions are going to cost more. How are we going to pay for them? Put another way, though, with the reality of the class struggle in mind, the problem looks more like: workers living longer means that the share of the national income going to the working class and away from the capitalists will rise if the current settlement is maintained. This is clear from Turner's choice. The reality of paying for the pensions through higher taxes would have been to take the cost of pensions from the surplus value produced by the working class as a whole and channel it back into their total life-time wage packet. It would have meant a transfer from capital to labour.

It obviously cannot be about real privation, real shortages - there is more than enough food, clothing and housing to go round. What will happen, though, is that relative to capital invested - and more importantly capital put aside in pension funds - the cost of outlays will rise. From this comes the myth that we are not saving enough - as if in choosing not to eat a loaf of bread today, it would mean there will be two loaves of bread tomorrow. Further, many of these retirees go on to do much useful work in the community or in family life - but it is work which does not generate profits directly and so is invisible to the capitalist planners.

This is a clear example of capital holding back production and distribution - causing complications and distortions to rational



economic activity by compelling us to play the game of turn-over. The system always ensures that production leads to the creation of more money and value and ultimately more money (and capital) for capitalists real and imaginary. Put another way: the advances from our labour - including an increased life span - are being clawed back by capital to its advantage.

In seeking, therefore, to try and spread the pain around, what the report is proposing is in fact to push the burden from the capitalists and onto the workers. We need to be clear: raising the retirement age of workers is a very real pay cut. We will be asked to work more years and for a greater proportion of our lives than we expected. For some this will be a very real loss.

Already there is a marked difference in life expectancy across income groups, with unskilled manual male workers having an expectancy of 71 years as compared to an average of 79 for professionals (and of course, these being averages means a great many do not reach them). That means that more than just cutting these workers' pay, these proposals will actually cost them a great deal of any extra life expectancy they might gain by 2050.

The distinctly Old Labour reforms to pensions of ending means-testing, linking pensions to earnings and compelling employer contributions are just a way of buying off the unions and disguising the reality of the attack. Of course, this report is just a set of proposals and it will be up to the Government to implement changes which may include some parts and not others. Already Gordon Brown has been making ominous noises of concern - preferring his model of means-testing (he calls it targeting resources on the poor) to a general simplified and slightly increased state pension.

The unions, though, are obligingly making noises about the poorest and least well off being hit hard by these proposals, but are essentially content with them. Now that 'class warfare' is a term to be derided in the labour movement, these organisations are blinded to the reality of the situation and the working class is left intellectually disarmed before a media barrage of lies about people living longer meaning paying more.

Rousing the unions to defend the workers' position within capitalism, though, isn't the job of socialists. Even if these reforms were stopped, the next economic crisis, the next half-baked excuse would soon come along to try and roll back the workers' share. Our mission is to show clearly both how we are robbed and exploited by the system ruled by capital and how we can untap the wealth of our collective productive power by taking control of the means of production directly.

In socialism everyone would have the opportunity to contribute to the community for as long as they could. Their contributions would not have to be strictly rationed nor controlled and all would be able to share in the common produce. The creation of second class cast-off workers known as pensioners would cease to be and in its place we could have a fair share for all. The struggle for such a society is in our immediate practical interest. ■

PIK SMEET

Be disobedient - think for yourself

Let's rebel! Let's free ourselves from the corrupt, rapacious society we live in!

We workers produce, organise, and manage production for a minority of capitalists who own what we produce; then, from the sale of the products we make, the capitalists accumulate more capital from profits. Some of the profits are reinvested to have us work to develop the production facilities for the owners, the remainder of the profits are used by the owners to expand their wealth and extend their power by controlling their governments and "persuading" politicians, both nationally and internationally.

Let us change this way of running affairs! We workers produce and distribute all goods; let us own everything and abolish private property, so

everyone can democratically decide how to care for each other.

This division of world society into those who own and control capital (the capitalist class), and those who have to work to increase the capitalists' wealth (the working class) must be abolished and replaced by a co-operative society of common ownership by freely associating individuals - that is everyone. A real inclusive society of carers with no selfish, private owning capitalists, as now, accumulating wealth and running society through their politicians and governments.

Under common ownership real democracy will work; everyone can participate fully in administration and be heard - not like now, when the 30 seconds it takes you to put a cross on the ballot paper is ignored for years by politicians too busy pocketing brown envelopes.

Within a society of

common ownership, if there are individuals elected they will be controlled by the electors and subjected to immediate recall. This means the elected will be servants of the electors, and recalled to be removed immediately by those who elected them, if they do not follow the instructions of those who gave them the chance to be public servants.

The evidence that everyone has equal power and an equal vote in every decision taken will be obvious within this future society by the removal of the threat of hunger, exercised under capitalist society against all who are unwilling to accept the conditions of work and compliance. Within this future society of freely associating, equal individuals, every man, woman and child will take what goods they want from a communal store. This free access, this freedom is what will maintain real democracy, and it will be possible because

money will be unnecessary and non-existent.

Money is a means of exchange in capitalist society, a form of rationing by the owners of the non-owners - no money, no goods. In a society of common ownership and free access - we use the word socialism to describe it - everybody will own everything, so why would we want to pay ourselves? Our common sense will tell us not to waste what could be shared with others.

As socialists we want to participate in a global-community progression to free humankind's real human potential. We are all equals, if different. We don't accept leaders, which is why we invite you to ignore leaders too. Begin to free yourself, be disobedient, think for yourself, ask questions, and inquire after the case we suggest.

- leaflet issued by socialists in Ireland.

Rationed freedom

The Economics of Freedom: An anarcho-syndicalist alternative to capitalism. Solidarity Federation. 2003. £2.50.

This 40-page pamphlet presents an alternative, variously described as an "anarchist economy" and "libertarian communism", to capitalism.

We wouldn't disagree with the general description of the alternative offered:

"... a society without money. People work as a social duty; wages are unnecessary - 'from each according to their ability'; and cash is no longer needed to acquire goods - 'to each according to need.'"

"... a system without the market and where everyone has equal rights to have their needs met..."

"... a society where all have equal control over decision-making and equal access to goods and services."

"All work is voluntary, and goods and services equally accessible. Money, wages and prices do not exist."

But what is surprising is the alternative to having to use money to acquire consumer goods described in the section "planning basics", which speaks of "voluntary 'rations', decided democratically":

"Some sophistication is needed to run this 'rationing' system. There is no point in allocating everyone four eggs a week. Some people do not eat eggs; others would prefer six but no cheese, and so on. In the case of food, it might be a ration of calories and nutritional intake, taking into account factors like age, height, special dietary and other needs. People would be entitled to any common foodstuff that met these needs, rather than being allocated quantities of specific foodstuffs."

We really are talking here about a system of rationing (without the inverted commas) in which people would be allocated (equal for people in equal circumstances) certain amounts of things. The proposed alternative to money turns out to be a computerised card to be presented to draw your entitlement from the common store:

"Allocation of goods can be computerised to record every product or service a person takes or uses with the information also being stored on cards to be presented when someone wants a product or service. The purpose is to prevent very excessive consumption. For example, it allows staff in common stores to query why someone might be requesting a new suite six months after getting the previous one."

This is surprising as the pamphlet is supposed to be describing an "anarchist economy" whereas the scheme proposed, involving as it would keeping computerised records of everything individuals consumed, can only with great difficulty be described as "libertarian". Not even capitalism does that! And, what about the shoplifters?

Socialist society will certainly, for

planning how much to produce, need a rough figure for what people are likely to consume over a given period, but this only needs to be measured globally for any district - as, for instance, by a computerised system of stock control or by sample polling - not at the level of each and every individual.

But why could not people have free access to consumer goods and services according to what they themselves decide their needs are? There are only two circumstances that would make this unworkable: (a) if it wasn't technically possible to produce enough to satisfy the needs of everyone, and (b) if it was thought that even a significant minority would consistently take more than they could use.

All the evidence suggests that, once the artificial scarcity imposed by the need to make a profit has been removed, and once all the resources currently wasted on selling activities (and on armaments and armed forces) have been redirected to useful production, then enough could be produced to supply everyone's needs. And experience of where even today people have free access to something - e.g. buses, telephones, drinking water, in some places - they only use these things when they need to. In any event, what would be the point of taking more than you needed when you could be certain that the stores would be stocked with what you wanted? That would just clutter up where you lived.

Certainly, particularly in the very early days of socialism and perhaps later after some unexpected natural disaster, there could be shortages of some things that might necessitate recourse to some system of rationing for those things. But this would only be exceptional and temporary, the normal situation being free access to goods and services according to self-determined needs.

What this pamphlet proposes is an intrinsic system of long-term rationing, even if the rations are to be decided democratically. That would be a possible alternative to money and, if it worked, fairer than money, but it's not necessarily what socialists advocate could - or should - happen in "a society without money".

ALB

Karen Horney Again

Dear Editors,

A letter last month quotes Karen Horney. Her book on neurosis is really worth a read since she was much in the same social psychology vein as Erich Fromm, i.e. finding more to neurosis in the way our society is than merely positing biological and individual causes. She argued that the neurotic individual doesn't have a large ego (real sense of self, not the negative connotation of ego) and substitutes an unreal sense of self in place.

As an illustration, every one of us gets told to get passes in this or that in order to get a well paid job. That can lead to someone knocking their head against a wall, doing things they aren't in to, and having an unrealisable goal to achieve and thus having a measure for their failure to get down over.

It has always been a socialist argument that we will do what we like doing in socialism and thus this will lead to harmonious development of people. Horney the psychiatrist put a theoretical or psychological insight/argument that backs this up somewhat.

GRAHAM TAYLOR, BRABRAND, DENMARK

Dear Editors,

Regarding Karen Horney, I found her first and last books the best and her other stuff mediocre. Her first book, New Ways in Psychoanalysis, is excellent if you want a crash course on Freud and she seems to be a bit more radical probably under the influence of "her close friend" Fromm. She seemed to have sold out a bit in her last book.

I don't want to give the impression that Neurosis and Human Growth is not worth a read. I think it is a must and is one of the most influential books I have read. I think you have to read it at least twice to get the full impact.

DAVE BALMER (by email)



Capitalism? Kids' Stuff

'Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff' is a new DVD from The Socialist Party which asks us to take a fresh look at the world we live in and to question some of the most basic assumptions about life in capitalism.

"All I can say is: Oh my god. I just can't believe how good this is!"
BILL HUSTON, BINGHAMPTON INDYMEDIA, NEW YORK

"I've been teaching for 30 years, and I find this to be one of the best short films I have ever used."
DOUG BROWN, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, NORTH ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

£5.50 (including P & P) from the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'

EAST ANGLIA

A new East Anglian Regional Branch has been formed. The branch's first meeting will take place on **Saturday 11 February** in Norwich from 12 noon to 4pm.

The agenda is as follows:

12 noon. Informal chat.

1pm. Meal

2pm to 4pm. Branch organisation and future activity.

The exact venue is: The Conservatory, back room of the Rosary Tavern, Rosary Road, Norwich.

All welcome.

CHISWICK

Tuesday 19 January

RUSSIA: AN ANALYSIS OF RECENT CHANGES

Speaker: Vincent Otter

Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4 (nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

Correction

Due to a printing error the last line and the name of the writer were left off the "Report from Paris" on page 8 of last month's *Socialist Standard*. The last sentence of the article should have read: "And capitalism should be eradicated without further delay to enable us to enjoy the beautiful things of this world without fear". The writer was Dele C. Iloanya, Paris.

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Mr. Bevan and the Bombs

The *Daily Sketch* (3/12/55) reported a BBC Television interview with Mr. Aneurin Bevan the previous evening in which he was asked what he would do about the H and A bombs if he became Prime Minister. According to the report he replied that he would abolish the H bomb but keep the A bomb. As he was a member of the Labour Government that made the A bomb any other reply about that weapon would have needed some explanation, but the reason he gave for regarding the H and A bombs as different propositions was singularly unconvincing.

"Pressed to express the difference, he said the differences of quantity became differences of quality. 'It's like comparing drowning in a bath with drowning in an ocean,' he said." - (*Daily Sketch*, 3/12/55.)

We would have supposed that both ways of drowning led to the victims being equally dead.

Mr. Bevan went on to say that he did not think that the H bomb "either postpones war or brings it nearer". In

this he differs from his associate, Mr. Richard Crossman, Labour MP for East Coventry (who, it is rumoured, has now moved away from the Bevanite group). Writing in the *Daily Mirror* (25/11/55) Mr. Crossman claimed that with both sides having the bomb the Powers dare not go to war.

"We are at peace today because no Great Power can make war without automatically blowing itself to pieces."

Mr. Crossman is, therefore, in favour of keeping the H bomb as well as the A bomb.

In the meantime the *Manchester Guardian* reports (7/11/55) that the American Government has given urgent instructions to the American military authorities "to widen research into germ and gas warfare, and warfare by the use of radio-active particles." It would appear from this that the American Government does not accept Mr. Crossman's view that large-scale war between the big

Powers must either be with the use of the H bomb or not at all. They evidently envisage other possibilities.

(from "Notes by the Way" by H., *Socialist Standard*, January 1956)



Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class,

and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working

class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class

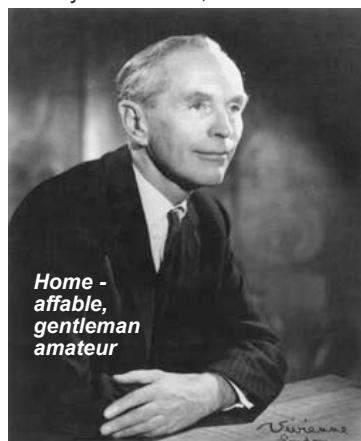
interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Nightmare for Tory leaders

By their decisive vote the Tory membership have elected, in David Cameron, a leader who seems to be unsure about his own identity. Is the man they have chosen the same David Cameron who, perhaps trying to impress us with his fearlessly rounded personality, recalled his ballet lessons as a child? Or is he the David Cameron who quickly denied having those lessons "after checking with his mother" (although not, apparently, with his spin doctors)? Is he David Cameron speaking, at the start of his campaign, to the Centre for Social Justice (and there's a grand name for an organisation that hardly anyone has heard of): "The biggest challenge our country faces is not economic decline, but social decline"? Or is he David Cameron three months later, when he told the assembled hacks outside Parliament: "I want us to confront the big challenge that this country faces: making sure we have a strong economy so we can generate the jobs we need . . ."? Is he David Cameron looking forward so much to being party leader: "I am very excited by it. I want to be a voice for change, for optimism and hope"? Or is he David Cameron shortly afterwards, who was asked on the Richard and Judy



Home - affable, gentleman amateur

show if the Tory leadership would not be some kind of poisoned chalice and responded starkly "It's a nightmare job"?

There are not a few precedents to encourage Cameron in that pessimistic - or rather realistic - assessment. At the Tory conference in 1963 it dawned on Alec Douglas-Home, then known to readers of Burke's Peerage as the 14th Earl of Home, that he - the government's affable gentleman amateur - was in serious danger of being uprooted from the mellow courtesies of the House of

Lords and dumped, as party leader and prime minister, into the bear garden of the Commons. This was not an attractive proposition. "Oh they must find someone else" he wailed to a lobby correspondent "Even if they can't agree on Rab (Butler) or Quintin (Hailsham) there must be someone else. But please, please, not me". But "they" did not "find someone else" because of all the contenders for the leadership he was considered to be the one least likely to be a disaster.

And on that unpromising assumption he was pitched into battle against Harold Wilson, whose craftily cultivated Yorkshire vowels enunciated the claim that the Labour Party stood for a thrusting, technological Britain while the Tories, by the very fact of Douglas Home becoming their leader, had proclaimed their resolve to cling to a discredited past. It did Home no good that he saw himself to be a "moderniser", charged with uniting his party after the schisms of the Macmillan years. His Party Chairman, along with many of his supporters, came to dread his efforts to compete with Wilson's grasp of the irrelevances of capitalist economics. On some of his prime ministerial journeys abroad his wife repeatedly had to remind him of their destination for fear that he would step off the plane and use the welcoming microphones to let everyone know how delighted he was to have arrived in some other city.

Heath

Home never mastered the techniques of putting across on television the deceptions and evasions so necessary to a politician. He came across as someone whose historically privileged background prevented him having any idea of how the majority of people lived - not that the politicians who do show some such



Heath - the frying pan...

understanding are any more effective. So it was some surprise, that it was by only a small margin that Home lost his one and only election in 1964. He then largely left the job of opposing the Wilson government to his lieutenants and in July 1965, as the tide of criticism rose around him, he resigned. In 1989 a TV interviewer asked him "You never really wanted to be Prime Minister did you?" and Home replied "Terrible intrusion into one's private life". As he left Downing Street his party resolved that never again would their leader "emerge" as he had; in future it would be through an election. Not that it has done them much good, or made the job less of a nightmare.

The first person to gain advantage of the Tories taking their first nervous steps into any kind of internal democracy was Edward Heath. He was by then already a controversial figure in the party, partly because of his support for British membership of the European Community and partly because he had pushed through the abolition of Resale Price Maintenance, which had affected a great many small shopkeepers. In a sense unknown to Home he was a "moderniser" whose modest background was in contrast to the earl in his castle among the grouse moors. But Heath resisted any attempt by Tory propagandists to "sell" him in that way, on the grounds that to do so would be to descend to the same depths of cynicism as Wilson.

During his five years as Leader of the Opposition Heath signalled that the Tories had broken with the policies of "Butskellism" - the consensus between Labour and Tory Chancellors about economic policy. In its place the party developed plans to reform - which really meant to curb - the effectiveness of trade unions to resist any attacks on wages or working conditions. At the same time there was to be an end to government helping out "lame ducks" - propping up firms or even industries which were in difficulties. In the short term the argument ran, this may cause problems, for example to workers who lose their jobs; but in the long run the logic of profitability would ensure greater and enduring prosperity for all.

Cameron

This was also called modernising but this latest plan to solve all the problems of British capitalism did not long survive the Tory victory at the 1970 election, as it was undermined by a series of what came to be called U turns. Finally, Heath's government was seen as a bunch of rigid blunderers who willingly reduced the country to a three day week rather than question the dogma contributing to the crisis.

By the time he lost the election in February 1974 Heath had few friends in his party and he was infamous for his unprovoked rudeness. He seemed genuinely to fail to understand why anyone could possibly resist the force of his arguments; as Douglas Hurd, who was then his Political Secretary, put it "He believed that people deserved the evidence and by god they were going to get it". Worse was to come for him as an exasperated party deprived him of the leadership and elected Thatcher in his place, leaving Heath to moulder on the back benches, jeered by his own party when he criticised the Thatcher government and immersed in what looked very much like the comfort of a long-term sulk.

And now it is Cameron's turn; the question is, in spite of his assurances, has anything really changed? On his way to the leadership Cameron presented himself as an architect of compassionate conservatism - as distinct, presumably, from cruel and pitiless conservatism. Well he would say that, wouldn't he - just as all the other recent leaders - Hague, Duncan Smith, Howard - have said it, before their party went on to fight an election on policies which were anything but compassionate. Of course cadging for votes does strange things to a politician; how else can we explain Cameron's recent yearning to give up his £1.2 million house in Notting Hill and move to Neasden. Or his inability to remember, not just whether he took Class A drugs, but whether he joined the Tory Party, when he was at Oxford. (With a memory like that, how on earth did he get a degree?)

When he said the job of Tory leader is a nightmare perhaps he had in mind, not just the experiences of the three men most recently in that job but the fact that he is the fifth Tory leader during the last eight years and that of the ten leaders starting with Churchill the majority have either been ousted or have resigned. A persistent feature of nightmares is the sensation of being out of control - something which all the politicians who profess to be able to shape capitalism to their will, perhaps to make it a compassionate social system - must know about. They may try to conceal the chaos behind a mask of confidence, until reality ensures that they wake up screaming. ■

IVAN



Thatcher - the fire



Voice from the Back

Never Steal Anything ...

The owning class through their schoolrooms and churches are forever telling young workers never to steal, but in reality the capitalists turn out to be the biggest thieves of all. "Fraud is costing British business £72 billion a year, according to a report out this week. Despite the warning of recent corporate scandals involving Enron, WorldCom, Parmalat and Refco, UK companies are still estimated to be losing 6 per cent of their annual revenue to fraud and corruption, says a study by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners and international lawyers Mishcon de Reya" (*Observer*, 20 November). £72 billion a year! It seems to be a case of never steal anything .. small.

Scots died from malnutrition, but last year that figure had soared to 99." (*Times*, 21 November) Even more alarming figures have been released for the UK by the charity Age Concern. "150,000 people over 65 have died as a result of the cold in the past five years." (*Times*, 25 November)

The Slaughter Of The Innocents

Capitalism's record of murder is even more horrific when looked at from a world perspective. "Nearly six million children die from hunger or malnutrition every year, The Food and Agriculture Organisation says. Many deaths result from treatable diseases such as diarrhoea, pneumonia, malaria and measles, the agency said. They would survive if they had proper nourishment, the agency says in a new report on world hunger." (*BBC News*, 22 November)

Our Masters' Voice

The Confederation of British Industry expresses the views of the British capitalist class. Here for

instance is Sir Digby Jones, the chairman of the CBI, on trade unions and international competition: "Trade unions in the private sector in the 21st century will become largely irrelevant.... There are 1.3 billion Chinese out there who want your lunch and a billion Indians who want your dinner." (*Times*, 22 November). Sir Digby is of course indulging in wishful thinking, he knows that the British working class's greatest protection against the profit-mad owners on the industrial front is the union. A greater threat to all the capitalists of the world would be the world's working class uniting politically. (See Rigg's view below).

Ah, Progress

The rapid growth of capitalism in China and India has been greeted with acclaim by all its supporters. There is another side to the story though, illustrated by two recent developments as reported in the *Observer* (27 November) The Chinese city Harbin, population 3.5 million, has had no water supply for four days because of the pollution caused by 100 tonnes of benzene - a colourless, odourless carcinogenic chemical - spilling into the river upstream after an explosion at the local chemical factory. "The poisoning of the Songhua river has exposed the murkier side of China's spectacular economic growth; the emphasis on business rather than environment, the tendency to cover up health risks and splits within the government." From India comes news of the exploitation of children to feed the rapacious growth of capitalism. 400 children were found



The Songhua river at Harbin, now full of benzene



Average digs at the Plaza Athenee

Room At The Top

Good news for the homeless in France, according to a recent report on hotels that have some vacancies. "The least expensive room at the George V, is about £390 per night including bedroom, bathroom and breakfast. The most expensive suite at the Plaza Athenee costs almost £10,000 per night and includes four rooms and breakfast" (*Times*, 30 November)

Old, Cold And Hungry

Malnutrition amongst elderly Scots has soared in the past ten years and pressure groups blame the Scottish Executive for allowing pensioners to live below the poverty line. In 1995, 40

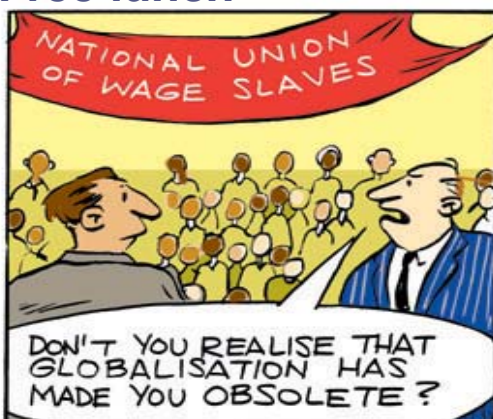


Some of the Delhi child labourers, photographed before being rescued

working in factories in Delhi. "Housed in a night shelter for beggars, the embroidery workers, aged 5 to 14, were waiting yesterday to hear their fate."

Free lunch

by Rigg



socialist standard

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Journal of The Socialist Party · Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Take Your Cut



Trade, Earth, and Earth Betrayed



China's
economy.
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The future capitalism offers

The last century saw two world wars and a prolonged cold war as up-and-coming capitalist states tried to challenge the domination of the world by the powers that had got there first - Britain and France with their colonial empires. Each time the top dogs beat off the challenge. In the end, America reduced Britain and France to second-rate status too. Now a new challenger is emerging: China.

The rulers of China have set themselves the task of building up their state as an industrial and military super-power to rival America and have begun investing in Africa and Latin America with a view to securing supplies of raw materials such as iron ore, copper, nickel, cobalt and, of course, oil. And the world's currently-dominant power - America - and its satellites like Britain are worried. "Insatiable Beijing scours the world for power and profit" was the shrill headline in the Times of London on 12 January. Already their defence (the Orwellian word for war) strategists are planning to build up their military might yet further to counter the challenge from China. So much for the so-called "peace dividend" of which there was briefly talk after the challenge from Russia was seen off.

Access to oil has already caused many wars in the Middle East and was a factor in the last world war. Hitler's



Chinese domestic oil

apparently mad decision to invade Russia was prompted by a desire to gain control of the oil resources of the Caspian area. One of Japan's aims, too, was access to oil in British-controlled Burma and Dutch-controlled Indonesia.

China today is in the same position as Japan before the last world war. That is the analysis of the Washington-based Worldwatch Institute in its annual State of the World report, for 2006, published last month. According to the summary in the Times, the report "draws the parallel between Japan in the 1930s and China today. It recalls that it was Japan's inability to secure its oil supplies from South-East Asia that prompted its entry into the Second World War. Today Beijing is strengthening its Navy to protect its energy supplies, shipped at great distances

from the Middle East, Africa and Latin America".

The report risked an understatement:

"The prospect of countries ranging from the United States and China to Japan and Saudi Arabia - together with the world's terrorists - vying for physical control of the world's oil does not sound like a prescription for global security."

After adding that India too would be involved in the scramble for oil and other resources, Worldwatch President, Chris Flavin, concluded: "We therefore face a choice: rethink almost everything, or risk a downward spiral of political competition and economic collapse".

Yes, that's the choice we really do face. The Worldwatch Institute was set up by the advocate of world government, Lester Brown, in 1974. Treating the world as one unit, so that issues such as resource allocation and protection of the global environment could be tackled on the only scale they can be, is certainly rethinking on the right lines. But world government in the context of continuing capitalist production for profit would not work. What is required - as the only way to avoid the risk of the 21st century being a repeat of the 20th - is world socialism as a world community without frontiers where the natural and industrial resources of the Earth have become the common heritage of all Humanity. ■

Introducing the Socialist Party

Who We Are

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism.

Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal.

We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

What We Do

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and

demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

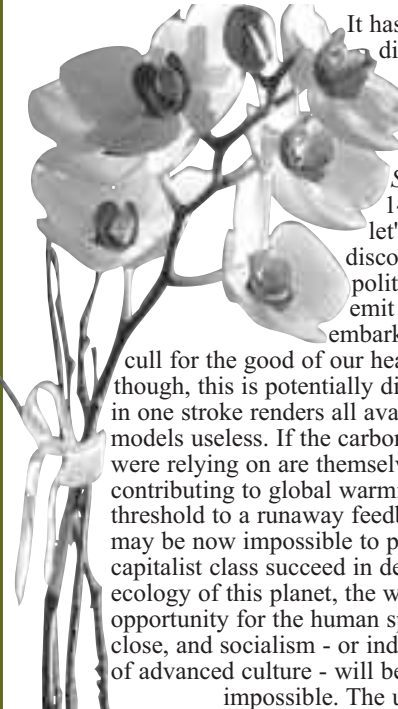
The Next Step

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.



Farting Flowers



It has been discovered that plants emit large amounts of methane (*New Scientist*, Jan 14, 2006). Now let's wait for the discovery that politicians also emit methane, and embark on a mass cull for the good of our health. Seriously though, this is potentially disastrous, and in one stroke renders all available climate models useless. If the carbon sinks we were relying on are themselves contributing to global warming, the threshold to a runaway feedback effect may be now impossible to prevent. If the capitalist class succeed in destroying the ecology of this planet, the window of opportunity for the human species will close, and socialism - or indeed any kind of advanced culture - will become impossible. The urgency of revolution is not decreasing with time, but increasing.



The Root of all Reason?

Is science the natural enemy of religion, or can they coexist?

Religious scientists (they do exist) will obviously answer the latter, but many scientists, reared on evidence-based thinking, could no more tolerate the free-for-all that is 'faith' than they could walk on water. Few scientists however bother to get up and attack superstition in so many words, it being considered beneath them.

Richard Dawkins has never been one to keep his views to himself, and the militant monarch of evolutionary biology has just recently been waging war on 'the religious virus' on UK TV (*The Root of all Evil?* Jan 9 & 16, Channel 4). This somewhat overambitious project - to lay waste the world's religions in two hours flat - ended up being frankly underwhelming. Truth is, our Richard suffers the same problem as a lot of socialists - he's so rational he doesn't really comprehend the nature of what he's dealing with, and this is a serious disadvantage when the argument goes nose to nose. The religious types, having had a logic-ectomy, are impervious to all the gigantic contradictions in their own world-view, and thus perform well, talk impressively, and look confident. Richard, on the other hand, clearly didn't go into these interviews properly prepared. Too long among real thinking humans who play by the rules of debate, he looked as shocked, baffled and bemused as somebody being addressed by a talking baboon in a dress. The effect, sadly, was that the zealots constantly seemed to get the better of him. It should not have been difficult for a scientist to make a fundamentalist bigot look the fool that he is (even accusing the scientist of

Yoof Culture

Free radicals in mitochondrial DNA, the energy producing parts of cells, may be the cause of ageing (*New Scientist*, Jan 14, 2006). There is an understandably irresistible imperative to drive back the death horizon, but wouldn't it be better to create a life worth living before trying to extend it any further? For many people, death is the only possible way to beat the system. Eternal life in capitalism does not sound like fun, and we'd have to develop some pretty effective birth control systems too. But just how long would one want to live anyway? Would 300 lifespans create a race of super-educated highly motivated polymaths, or a rag-bag of apathetic and listless slugs too indolent even to wash?



Faking It

The recent furore in South Korea over the 'faked' results of the stem-cell research team headed by Woo Suk Hwang (*New Scientist*, Dec 24, 2005), has spiralled down into mutual recrimination amid more intensive probing into the past cloning work of the world famous team. This raises the question: would scientists or their researchers ever be disposed to fake results in socialism? Without the

financial and status rewards that are capitalism's strong incentives, it's hard to see how. Who could own science in socialism, and therefore who could buy, sell, steal, corrupt, or profit personally from it? And therefore, what motive would any scientist have to lie? Socialism does not make people 'honest'. It just gives them no particular reason to be 'dishonest'.

arrogance, which was a nice touch), but one had the feeling that Dawkins actually was being a tad arrogant in his approach, imagining that reason and the scientific method were all the weapons he would need. Socialists, who have a lot more experience of this sort of debate, could have told him it wasn't going to be that easy. These people just don't roll over and die when calmly presented with the facts. The only thing to do is go for the jugular, make them squirm, make them angry, and then enjoy the fun. Instead, it was Dawkins who was too angry, and Dawkins who wasn't thinking straight. And in indulging his exquisite loathing of the religious 'meme' he makes an unwarranted simplification. In imagining that 'without religion, good people would do good things, and evil people would do evil things', he takes no real account of the social pressures inherent in capitalist class society. Not all people who kill are evil, nor do they do it for religious reasons, and contrary to what Dawkins implies, suicide bombing was not invented by religious extremists but by atheist Leninists (the Tamil Tigers). Indeed, new research that Dawkins is surprisingly unaware of shows that for someone to become a suicide bomber takes no extreme belief-system at all (*New Scientist*, July 23, 2005).

But why attack religion on TV, and why now? Dawkins does not really explain, but the answer lies in a secondary school in Dover, Pennsylvania, where a celebrated federal court case has made headlines around America for weeks. Dawkins, with many other biologists, was incensed that the school board of governors ruled that Intelligent Design should be taught in science lessons

alongside evolution, as if it had equal scientific validity. In America, ID cannot be taught in 'religious lessons' separately because such lessons are outlawed by the First Amendment, which separates Church from State. Thus, religion is smuggled in by other means. However, the parents weren't having it, and sued the school, and in the end the parents won and the governors had to resign, their defence team having made themselves look ridiculous in court, equating ID with astrology. So why wasn't Dawkins himself called as a witness for the prosecution, one wonders? He would have jumped at it. The surprising answer is that the parents didn't want him, for the even more surprising reason that, defenders of evolution though they were, they were Christians themselves. Even among religious people there is clearly only so much unreason they can take.

So should scientists really worry about a new-age fundamentalism wiping out all progress and knowledge, burning the libraries of Alexandria and plunging the world into the long night of ignorance, fear and superstition? Well, they can worry, but there's really no need to be paranoid. Religion has had to do all the hard work of accommodating more and more scientific progress, which is why mature religions tend to become ever vaguer and more metaphorical, and there's no prospect, save nuclear Armageddon, of the world's knowledge being lost again. Progress is progress, and it will stand. Dawkins can vent his spleen, and he is right to do so, but fear of a new order of god-driven moral extremism is probably taking things a little too far. And blaming the ills of the world on sad delusionals merely deflects attention away from the real problem - the divisive effect of class and its social relations.

Education? Education? Education?

Dear Editors,
Rarely does a newscast pass without mention of education. New initiatives are released like frantic hounds hunting down a headline. Examinations are or are not more stringent than ever they were. Primary school leavers enter secondary functionally illiterate and/or innumerate. Eight years on from being elected promising to solve all educational conundrums, the Labour government flounders on. Recently its education ministers turned on their own enforcers OFSTED for giving good reports on schools that subsequently appeared in the relegation zone of the league tables. If ever there was a paradigm of capitalism it is education.

When state education was established towards the end of the 19th century rote learning, lots of copying and well marshalled callisthenics was the rule. This reflected industrial processes for which those children were being prepared. Today the direct influence of capitalism is to be seen in the managerial approach; the setting and measuring of targets, a tightly controlled and prescriptive national curriculum, all inspected by the pedagogic commissars of OFSTED.

What is not considered, despite much rhetoric to the contrary, is that each child is an individual, ironic for a system that lauds individualism. In truth there is a continuum of ability in any area, not some crass equality

that can be state imposed. Socialists have no difficulty with the concept of from each according to ability, an obvious recognition of difference, to each according to need, a guarantee no one can suffer or prosper due to congenital factors. Of course capitalism cannot act on this basis. The absolute need to produce for profit requires a trained workforce, why else make school attendance a legal requirement, pupils being the only members of our society forced by law into an institution without being convicted in court. Education becomes associated with a punitive regime rather than a wide variety of ways everyone, whatever their innate abilities, could enhance their lives.



At the end of the 19th century school boards were concerned about levels of truancy and poor achievement. Their answer? Industrial schools where a more vocational approach could appeal to those who were not so academic. Little changes really and cannot, until people accept that education will only be transformed along with society in general. Abolish capitalism and promote the co-operative, moneyless and worldwide common ownership that is socialism. And only then will the economic and social deprivation that is such a negative influence on so many children's lives be done away with. Only then will education be determined by those who want to be educated, instead of it being subjected to the pet nostrums and egos of politicians.

DAVE ALTON, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

Defeatist?

Dear Editors,
I agree with most of what Adam Buick writes in "Capitalism and the quality of life" (January *Socialist Standard*). Just a couple of supplementary points. He mentions Lefebvre's *A Critique of Everyday Life* and Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* as good on criticising commodity culture. I think socialists will find any of Andre Gorz's books better value on that subject.

The other point is what, if anything, we can do about the spread of money-commodity relations into all aspects of life. The article says "There's nothing that can be done to stop this within the context of capitalism ..." Unduly pessimistic and defeatist, I think. We can protest at every manifestation of capitalist culture we come across.

I remember about 30 years ago being invited to a teachers' union meeting in California. Just before the interval the chairperson introduced a guy who promptly started to sell insurance. I was amazed and voiced my displeasure. They all looked sheepish, but nobody said anything. I'm not saying the revolution took a step forward that day. But if a few hundred, then a few thousand, then a million of us publicly declare our opposition to capitalism...

STAN PARKER (by-email)

Totalitarian

Dear Editors,
In assessing Bukharin (December *Socialist Standard*) we must be aware he belonged to the totalitarian Bolshevik Party. He supported the Bolsheviks' forcible

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SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. 1st Thur. 8-9pm.

The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace

(above Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

J. Moir. Tel: **0131 440 0995**

JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk

Branch website:

http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/

Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of

each month at 8pm in Community

Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road,

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Tel: **0141 5794109** Email:

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Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave,

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West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in

month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community

Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge,

Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53

Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston,

West Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: **01506**

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WALES

Swansea branch. 2nd Mon, 7.30pm,

Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres:

Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well

Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB.

Tel: **01792 643624**

Cardiff and District. John James, 67

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China: the mines that kill



As shown by the tragedy in West Virginia at the start of this year, mining is hard, unpleasant and dangerous work. Coal is the main substance mined, so naturally that is where most of the fatalities occur. The annals of the coal industry are indeed full of appalling disasters: over four hundred miners killed at a pit in Senghenydd in Wales in 1913, for instance, and over three hundred at the Monongah mine, also in West Virginia, in 1907. Even a list of disasters, however, says nothing about the many more whose lives have been crippled and shortened by diseases resulting from working in a mine. As the industry in Britain has been progressively closed down, mining and its dangers have been shifted to other countries, especially China. The disasters have been exported there as well:

'China produces 35 per cent of the world's coal but accounts for 80 per cent of fatalities globally. The death rate is 30 times that of South Africa and 100 times higher than in the United States. Mining coal in China is probably the most dangerous job in the world.'

(http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/en/web/article.php?article_id=50250)

Over six thousand Chinese coalminers were killed at work in 2004 (the equivalent of one Senghenydd-like death toll every three weeks or so).

In August last year, for instance, the Daxing mine in Guangdong province was flooded and 123 miners killed (*Beijing Review*, 25 August). The previous month, another mine in the same area had been flooded, killing sixteen miners; after this, the local government ordered all mines to close for a safety inspection, but this did not happen.

The Daxing mine, which was privatised in 1999, was producing well above its intended capacity. The millionaire owner of the mine had paid



out massive bribes to local officials: the mine received a safety certificate in June, which it clearly should not have done. Many of the mine managers have gone on the run, and the local mayor has been suspended from his office. Corruption and the ignoring of safety regulations are the immediate reasons behind the tragedy.

The list goes on and on: 171 killed in an explosion in Heilongjiang province in November, this time at a state-owned colliery; 214 at the Sunjiawan mine in Liaoning province last February; 166 killed in an explosion at Chenjiashan mine in Shaanxi province in November 2004. In March last year eighteen miners died following a gas explosion in the Xinfu mine, also in Heilongjiang: the owner was deputy director of the local safety bureau. Xinfu should have been closed on account of its fairly scanty coal reserves, but it had been registered as having nearly three times the actual figure.

It is not just the disasters themselves that are so appalling. After the Chenjiashan explosions, widows of the dead miners were harassed by police and others, and contact between them and anyone outside the local area was made as difficult as possible. They were paid less in compensation than in other cases. Nobody has been charged in connection with the deaths.

Safety regulations in Chinese mines are (pardon the unfortunate play on words) a dead letter. The rules and

regulations may exist, but mine owners, whether the state or private capitalists, have little incentive to enforce them. Bribery and corruption are rife, with many local officials in the pay of the owners and so encouraged to turn a blind eye to violations and to



ignore safety inspections. The regulations are more for show than for the safety of the workers. As with capitalism anywhere, output and profit take first place, with consideration for the producers a long way behind. At Chenjiashan, the mine manager is said to have told the safety chief, "The

management wants coal, not miners."

Nor can everything be seen as a consequence of the recent partial privatisation of the Chinese mining industry. Some disasters have occurred in mines that are still state-owned, while the biggest death toll in a Chinese mine was at Laobaidong in Shanxi province back in 1960, when no fewer than 684 died.

Despite the increase in the use of oil, coal remains the primary source of energy in China. The country burns a quarter of the world's coal, with coal making up two-thirds of China's energy consumption and being used mostly for power generation. Yet much of the equipment is outdated and many of the smaller mines in particular are very inefficient. With the demand for energy ever-increasing, there is bound to be pressure to produce more and more, with the inevitable short cuts and downgrading of safety issues. As always, it is the miners and their families who suffer while the owners, whether private capitalists or those who control the government, are those who benefit.

A Socialist society would presumably do its utmost to replace human miners with robots or to find other sources of energy besides coal. Capitalism, in China as elsewhere, is a violent and murderous system that should be replaced as soon as possible. ■

Paul Bennett

Right and above: scenes from the Chenjiashan mine explosion in Shaanxi province in November 2004



The nationalist madness

Once again recent events in Morocco have brought to the fore the madness in the nationalist issue. Hundreds of West Africans who tried to enter Spain through Morocco were brutally maltreated by the Moroccan security services apparently at the instigation of the Spanish authorities. They were beaten, put in prison and many were driven to the heart of the desert and left there to die.

In the wake of the brutal attacks on these West Africans, many human rights groups in Morocco came out in their numbers to protest against the inhuman act. Unfortunately most of these activists attributed the action of the Moroccan authorities to racism. This however is a gross misrepresentation of the issue.

This misguided hatred of fellow human beings who happen not to have been born (or who have not been officially recognised as 'citizens') in certain parts of this world is not just found in Africa but everywhere in the world. This inhuman phenomenon makes nonsense of the oneness of the human race as preached by the UN, Christianity, Islam, etc. But this state of affairs could not have been otherwise in a world that is controlled by vampires whose only concern is profits and who place money on a higher pedestal than human beings.

The unfortunate aspect of this hatred towards the 'foreigner' or 'alien' is that the champions of nationalism use the

working class of their countries against the working class of other countries. The truth however, is that the loyalty felt by many members of the working class to their country is a misplaced loyalty. Their so-called leaders actually hold them in the same measure of contempt as the 'foreigner' members of the working class. In real terms there is no difference whatsoever between these 'citizens' who gleefully inflict the pain and the 'foreigner' on whom the pain is inflicted. The two groups are both exploited by the ruling class. In fact these African youth who were trying to enter Spain en route to inner Europe were actually forced to abandon their birthplaces by the actions of the ruling class of this world. No one in this world is unaware of the poverty and misery that is the lot of the African. And the capitalists cause this.

The only real division that exists between human beings is their access to the resources and wealth of the world. In this money-dominated world, the minority ruling class (the capitalists) own and control these resources and wealth - the land, factories, the transport and communication network, etc. The working class has no access to these and has to sell their mental and physical labour power to the former in return for peanuts.

Nationalism is therefore an illusion that has no basis in reality. The working class in Morocco has more in common to the working class in sub-Saharan Africa

(and indeed the working class of the whole world) than it has with its masters in Morocco and else where. The point, in a gist, is that nationalism is nothing short of an ideology that seeks to enhance the profit-making interests of the capitalist class.

However, the problem of nationalism cannot be wished away. To do away with it will mean to eliminate the present system that fosters it. This system ensures that a minority owns and controls the means with which wealth is produced and distributed whilst the vast majority who actually does the production owns nothing. The resources and wealth of the world must be owned and controlled by all humanity. Under such an arrangement, no one will care who goes where or who belongs where. Then nationalism and its present brutalities would have been buried.

But this type of system - call it socialism - can only be possible when people make efforts to understand the workings of not just that system but also this capitalist system. ■

Editorial from latest issue of the "African Socialist", now renamed "Socialist Banner; journal of World Socialism in Africa" which is now out. Copies can be obtained (price £1.30, including postage and packaging) from 52 Clapham High, London, SW4 7UN.

Meetings

Central London Dayschool

Saturday 18 February. 13.30 to 17.00

DEMOCRACY: IS IT A WASTE OF TIME?

13.30 Welcome. Tea. Coffee. Biscuits

14.00 Democracy and Capitalism

Is "bourgeois" democracy just a facade or can it be used? Sandy Easton looks at the question.

15.20 Break

15.30 Democracy and Socialism

Richard Headicar on why democratic participation is a key feature of a socialist society.

16.50 Conclusion

Toom 7, Friends Meeting House (side entrance), 173 Euston Rd, London NW1 (opposite Euston mainline station). Nearest tubes: Euston, Euston Square.

Swansea

Monday 13 February, 7.30pm

Do you know what Capitalism is? (Showing of DVD *Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff*)

Monday 13 March, 7.30pm

Do you know what Socialism is?

Monday 10 April, 7.30pm

Globalisation: what does it mean?

All at Unitarian Church (next to Argos), High St, Swansea.

Manchester Dayschool

Saturday 25 March, 1pm to 5pm

'Poverty and the Housing Question'

Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street (behind central library)

East Anglia

A new East Anglian Regional Branch has been formed. The branch's first meeting will take place on Saturday 11 February in Norwich from 12 noon to 4pm.

The agenda is as follows:

12 noon. Informal chat.

1pm. Meal

2pm to 4pm. Branch organisation and future activity.

The exact venue is: The Conservatory, back room of the Rosary Tavern, Rosary Road, Norwich.
All welcome.

Manchester

Monday 27 February, 8 pm

'Why Socialists Are Not Left-Wing'

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre

More meetings on page 18

Labour, the state and the market

Tony Blair has announced he intends to cling onto power for most of his current term before handing over to a successor, because he wants to see through his major visionary reforms of the "public sector" in the United Kingdom. He has been very good, over the past nine years, at talking about his desire for "reform" and "modernisation" but has generally not sought to describe in detail what he means by those two bland words.

Look back over his time in office, the main theme that emerges seems to be his attitude to the state sector and the welfare state. The difference between, say, Ramsay MacDonald's government of the 1930s and Blair's of the 21st century has been the existence of a massive state sector in the economy. When Blair took office the British state accounted for around 35 percent of economic activity. Some critics take glee in observing that in some parts of the country - such as the North East - the state accounts for a higher proportion of economic activity than it did in some of the collapsed state capitalist economies in Eastern Europe (above 60 percent). The European Union's Growth and Stability Pact obliges the British government to keep its borrowing under 3 percent of GDP, and the British government has a policy of trying to keep it to under 4 percent. Over Christmas, *Private Eye* suggested that it may have broken this self-imposed rule because some borrowing on certain Public Finance Initiative (PFI) deals really should be classified as government borrowing.

McDonaldisation

The existence of a large state sector worries the private representatives of capital. The encroachment of state bureaucrats could put them out of a job, and threatens to soak up money and resources



'Supersized fares, performance-free service', the Public Private rail system that is virgin on the ridiculous.

that could have been used to make profits and grow more capital for themselves. Their paid apologists - often referred to as economists - fret over something called 'moral hazard', the idea that economic actors spending other people's money are not as careful with it as if it were their own. Obviously, this is a major concern for people who invest in companies run by professional managers, and also for people examining the state where there will always be more tax money next year. These economists take capital's myths of competition to heart and believe that without competition and the threat of bankruptcy, you cannot have economic efficiency.

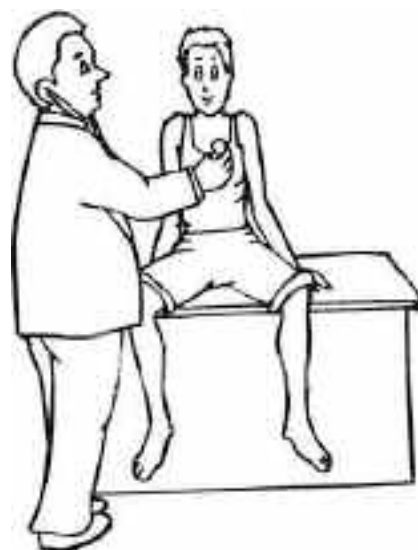
It is worth noting that when these people talk of efficiency all they are referring to is the bottom line. All they are concerned with is costing as little as possible. For example, the sociologists who devised the 'McDonaldisation of Society' concept noted that the fast food and supermarket service industries, in the name of choice, reduced the amount of service you'd find in a traditional shop or cafe. People are expected to help themselves, and thus save staff time and the firms' costs. This is much more efficient from the point of view of the financier and the accountant, possibly less so for the person stuck in yet another bloody supermarket queue.

In essence, New Labour has been about the McDonaldisation of the state. It has been about promoting competition and building fake markets in order to try and get civil servants to behave more like the ideal businessperson. Time and again, this is what reform and modernisation has meant. The main form this takes is to change the role of the state itself, from being the provider of a service to being the buyer of a service on behalf of the public. A simple example would be from the time when the Tories introduced Compulsory Competitive Tendering for local authorities. Instead of the local council collecting the bins, a firm collected bins on behalf of the council.

This has been intended to promote competition between companies who can provide such services, and drive down costs and improve efficiency. In theory, these firms can be sacked and can lose money if they fail to provide the service required. The problem is that it costs so much to run the bidding and contract writing process, and the services are so essential, that rather than sack firms most authorities are prepared to pay the existing firm more to help them meet their contract. Much the same problem emerges with PFI deals - where firms even get paid just to put in a bid.

Pseudo-markets

At the beginning of 2006 a new rule was introduced into the NHS requiring GPs when recommending elective surgery to provide at least four choices of hospital, one of which must be a private institution (with the operation to be paid for out of NHS funds). GPs themselves are supposed to operate as semi-independent companies, with competition within the NHS being provided by the Primary Care Trusts (PCT). The need to control their budget and to meet their targets is meant to promote a pseudo-market within the NHS and improve efficiency. The effect of that has been seen in Oxfordshire recently where the NHS PCT suspended performing corrective surgery for irregular heartbeats as



"I'm sorry, but I can't hear any money."

inessential. It is only one of many trusts with large budgetary deficits.

A similar process can be seen in the provision of council housing. Despite committing itself to repairing dilapidated council homes, the government is refusing to release funds for residents in Camden because they have voted to reject moving their council homes from council ownership to a charitable housing association. Residents in many areas are also being asked to engage in this empty sham of democracy. The effect of this would be to dramatically reduce the capital value of council (and thus state) owned assets, and also to mean that borrowing for renovation would not be state borrowing, but the private borrowing of these charitable associations. A great deal of time, effort and money is being spent on what is essentially a way of getting round accounting technicalities and of removing council housing from political control and handing it over more directly to managerial teams of business folk.

In schools much hullabaloo is being made about proposed reforms which would release them from Local Education Authority (LEA) control. They would essentially be self-contained business units, with their own budgets, competing - via exam results - to attract pupils and therefore funding. The clear concern is that schools that can select bright pupils will therefore guarantee themselves better results. Further, private sector partners are being asked to help set up City Academies - where they can have an input to the curriculum and ethos of the school.

The net effect of all this is to remove such activities from democratic and political control and place them in the hands of professional managerial people shipped in from the private sector. Specifically, since these contracts are subject to commercial confidentiality, accountability and control is considerably lessened. This, though, isn't a million miles away from the ideas of how to run society advocated by the likes of the Fabian Society founders of Labour - dedicated to using a controlled market to improve society as they found it at the close of the 19th century. They even advocated direct competition between state providers and private providers to see who could be the most efficient. They, however, at least



Cooking the Books (1)

Calculating the rate of profit

Every quarter, the government's Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes figures for "corporate profitability". The latest, those for the third quarter of 2005, were released on 5 January (see www.statistics.gov.uk). They show that the profitability of gas and extraction companies rose from 34.4 percent in the previous quarter to 36.3 percent, while that of service companies stayed more or less the same at 16.6 percent and that of manufacturing companies fell from 7.1 to 6.2 percent. Overall profitability of private non-financial corporations as a whole fell from 13.8 to 13.4 percent.

But what do they mean by profitability? The ONS explains:

"Profitability compares the profits made by companies

with the value of the buildings, plant, machinery and vehicles held as capital assets by these companies. Expressed as a 'rate of return' on assets held, these can be compared between sectors to judge whether the returns on investment are worthwhile".

Marx divided capital into two parts: "constant capital" (which was, as above, the value of the buildings, machinery, unprocessed materials, unsold goods, etc), which he designated by the symbol C, and "variable capital" (basically the money-capital required to pay wages), called variable (V) because it was the only part of total capital that varied in the process of production - through the labour of the workers creating a surplus value (S).

For Marx, the rate of profit was calculated as S divided by C + V, expressed as a percentage. The ONS's profitability is not the same, but is more like S divided by C.

Marx expected, as he explained in the opening chapters of Volume III of Capital, the rate of profit to tend to be the same in whatever line of business money capital was invested. But, going by the figures released by the ONS, this does not appear to be the case, with profitability in services currently at around 16 percent, higher than in manufacturing where it is around 6-7 percent? The ONS offers an explanation:

"Generally, service sector profitability is higher than that of the manufacturing sector, reflecting the more capital-intensive nature of the manufacturing sector".

This is reasonable enough. In the service sector the proportion of C to V is less than in manufacturing, i.e. a higher proportion of their money capital has to be invested in employing workers than in acquiring plant, equipment, machinery, materials, etc. This being the case, if you are calculating the "rate of return" only as S/C rather than as S/(C + V), i.e. ignoring V, profitability in the service sector will come out higher than in manufacturing. On Marx's definition, which takes into account V, - for which statistics are not produced - it would tend to be more equal.

What about the extremely high profitability - over 30 percent - of oil and gas companies? Oil and gas extraction is similar to land used for agriculture where the price of the product is fixed by costs on the least

fertile land in use. Those whose costs are lower than on this land reap an extra monopoly profit - or "ground rent" as Marx, following the tradition of Classical Political Economy, called it.

The high profits in the UK oil and gas extraction business are to be explained by the fact that the costs of extraction in the North Sea are much lower than in those oilfields, elsewhere in the world, whose production costs set the price. Their profits, in other words, contain an element - a large element in fact - of "ground rent" rather than profit in the strict sense of a return on capital invested, a fact allowed for by Marx in his analysis of landed property later on in Volume III.



'We're not doing lessons, we're expanding our portfolios of attractive business options'.

advocated some form of minimum condition of work to ensure protection of labour and to limit its exploitation by this competition.

Although PFI and Contracting Out deals are protected by a deal with the unions called TUPE which means existing workers retain their current wages and benefits, it's clear that introducing these private firms means new workers are much lower paid, and are without union

protection. This is largely because Thatcherite union laws make solidarity striking difficult and many of the workers involved - most commonly cleaners - are in difficult-to-unionise industries anyway. Indeed, there is a good prospect that much of this marketisation of the state is about breaking away from national union pay bargaining.

This brings us to the reality of the situation. As Karl Marx showed in volume III of Capital, capitalism is not driven by the competition between the commodities at the market place. The biggest profits go to the capitalist with the most capital - or at least, who can most effectively deploy it in production. The real competition of capitalism is between the workers and the capitalists - the struggle to lessen the cost

"The real struggle is to lessen the cost of labour compared to the length of the working day. This is at the heart of what the private sector's much vaunted efficiency does."

of labour compared to the length of the working day. This is at the heart of what the private sector's much vaunted efficiency does.

What the government is doing in creating these vast pseudo-markets is wasting time, effort and resources in maintaining the illusion that capital presents of itself as a group of industrious shopkeepers haggling in the town square. Building these pseudo-markets only serves to support the existence of the capitalist market

generally, and, more specifically, the labour market. If we assume for one moment that the reforming zeal of Blair et al is actually genuine (despite his every effort to give the contrary impression) then all we socialists can say is that the mere existence of the wages system means that they will spend their time treacle-grinding rather than getting to the real roots of society's problems and needs. ■

PIK SMEET

Free Trade, Fair Trade or No Trade?



The World Trade Organisation negotiations in Hong Kong in December didn't get very far. There had been talk of a deal to further "liberalise" world trade, under which the developed capitalist countries would drop restrictions on agricultural products from the "developing" countries in return for these reducing their tariffs on industrial imports. The most that emerged was a promise by the EU to stop subsidising agricultural exports by 2013 - provided that in the meantime there was an agreement on the other points. Not enough, said EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, to make the meeting a true success, but enough to save it from failure.

Maybe in time - April is the next deadline - some agreement, even along the lines envisaged, will be reached. But, given the nature of capitalism, it is not surprising that agreement is proving difficult. The WTO has 149 member states - 149 capitalist states, each with its own economic interests to defend and promote.

Under capitalism goods are produced for sale with a view to profit. Profits originate from the surplus value created by the workers who actually produce the goods that are put on sale, but are realised - i.e., converted into money - only when the goods are sold. Built in to capitalism, therefore, is an intense and relentless competition between capitalist firms to sell their goods, not only between firms in the same country but on the world market between firms from different countries. The role of states in this competition is to defend and promote the economic interests of the capitalist firms within their frontiers, by, for instance, protecting them from foreign competition on the home market or helping them to conquer foreign markets, which are of course the home markets of other countries.

A range of measures are open to states to do this. They can impose tariffs and quotas on imports (protectionism) and they can offer insurance and other financial aid for exports. They can pay subsidies on

exports (dumping), but this is politically controversial since these subsidies have to come from taxes on non-exporting capitalist firms within the state.

If these policies - protectionism and dumping - get out of hand, they turn into "beggar-my-neighbour" and no state gains. This can lead to wars, and was in fact one of the causes of the Second World War when Germany and Japan felt they had no alternative to go to war to break through the restrictions on their trade resulting from the policies pursued by Britain, France and America. So there is room for promoting capitalist interests all round by negotiations such as those at Hong Kong aimed at what is in effect tariff disarmament.

The jockeying for competitive position that went on in Hong Kong wasn't just between the industrially developed "West" (including Japan and Australia) on the one hand and the poor states of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean on the other. There were also arguments among the developed capitalist states themselves. The US wanted access to EU markets for its agricultural products, while the EU accused the US of hidden dumping since its "food aid" involved giving food (for which US farmers are paid) rather than money. Then there were the "emerging" capitalist states - China, India, Brazil, Russia - which also want access to EU (and US) markets, but are precisely the countries to which the West wants easier access for its industrial goods. The really poor states - the so-called "Least Developed Countries" - have no clout at all, and are only defended by Non-Governmental Organisations such as Oxfam and the World Development Movement (which also have no clout). In fact, they are not likely to gain anything out of any deal, which will be a carve-up between the developed and the emerging capitalist states.

Free Trade v Fair Trade

Alongside the clash of economic interests there was an ideological battle between the partisans of "free trade" and those of "fair

“Production for use, not profit, is the alternative to both the free trade favoured by capitalist corporations and the fair trade favoured by the development NGOs”



trade".

The ideology of "free trade" (no restrictions on imports or exports) has been part of conventional economics since David Ricardo propounded his theory of "comparative advantage" in 1817. Ricardo took as an example Portugal as a producer of wine and England as a producer of "cloth and hardware". While Portugal could produce cloth and hardware and England wine, neither could do so as cheaply as the other; if they did this there would be a waste of resources compared with what would happen if Portugal specialised in wine and England in cloth and hardware. This was because, said Ricardo, the cheaper wine produced in Portugal and the cheaper cloth and hardware produced in England could then be exchanged for more of each other. Both sides would be better off.

This is the theory, but it doesn't allow for change. It was obviously attractive to English capitalists as it meant that they would have a world monopoly in manufactured goods. But it was not so attractive to the up-and-coming capitalists of other countries who wanted to produce industrial goods too, nor to the rulers of these countries who wanted to build up their industrial and military strength to better compete for a place in the sun. So they, the US and Germany in particular, embraced protective tariffs for "infant industries", as propounded by the German economist Friedrich List.

By the end of the 19th century the manufacturing industries of these two countries were strong enough to compete with British industry and even to outcompete British products. A section of the British capitalist class began to have second thoughts about free trade; they demanded protection for British industry through tariffs imposed on foreign imports. They called this "fair trade". A hundred years ago "free trade" versus "protection" was in fact the main bone of contention between the free-trade Liberals and the protectionist Tories.

Today, the main ideological defenders



David Ricardo

of "fair trade" (protectionism) are the "development NGOs". Thus, Benedict Southworth, Director of the World Development Movement issued a press release on 13 December declaring:

"More free trade is not the answer to Africa's problems. Trade Justice means poor countries getting access to our markets to sell their goods without being forced to open their own economies to our multinationals and losing their ability to protect poor farmers, infant industries and basic services."

While Barbara Stocking, Director of Oxfam, wrote to the *Times* (19 December): "South Korea and Tokyo industrialised using state intervention such as high tariffs to protect infant industries and credit for strategic sectors. The EU and US are pressing to force developing countries to lower their industrial tariffs even though these policies helped South Korea, Taiwan and others to trade their way out of poverty. If Korea had stuck to its supposed 'comparative advantage', it would still be exporting rice and wigs instead of cars and computers".

In an article in the *Times* (14 December) journalist Carl Mortished admitted that free trade wouldn't benefit the

poorest states, but rather the emerging capitalist states:

"Free trade is fair and just, contrary to what Oxfam will tell you. However, because it is just, it cannot be kind. Trade works in favour of those with comparative commercial advantages and the poorest nations have few. If an agriculture deal is done in Hong Kong, the winners will be powerful developing nations with agribusiness potential, such as Brazil and India. The farmers of Mozambique will gain little. The reason emerges in a report by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation. The State of Food and Agriculture 2005 concludes that liberalising farm trade would benefit consumers in protected markets, such as the EU, with lower-priced food. It will also benefit efficient producers, such as Brazil, but the poorest countries will suffer."

So was he, then, in favour of "fair trade" for the poorest states? Not at all, as the title of his article "Why 'fair trade' is bad for poor nations it seeks to help" proclaimed. Preaching being cruel to be kind, he argued that farmers in these countries "don't need favours, but fertiliser and equipment. In short, they need investment, and that means more open markets ... Poor countries must reform if they are to compete. If we stopped throwing favours at them, the reforms might begin".

He's right about one thing: "they are to compete". They have to. All states have to. And that's the problem. Built in to capitalism is competition, and where there is competition there are losers as well as winners. Oxfam, the WDM and the others are on completely the wrong track in imagining that there can be no losers or that the winners will help the losers out to their own disadvantage.

One World

We are living in a world that has the productive potential to turn out enough to adequately feed, clothe, house, educate and care for the health of every single person on the planet, irrespective of where they live. That this isn't done today is due to the ↑

fact that the production and distribution of wealth is organised on the basis of buying and selling, of trade.

The Earth's natural resources and separate parts of the world-wide industrial network are owned separately, by corporations, states or rich individuals. These owners compete amongst each other to sell what those they employ produce and so realise as profit the surplus value contained in them. This has a number of effects. Production stops, not when enough to satisfy people's needs has been produced, but well before this, when what people can afford (the market) has been catered for. At the same time there is a huge waste of resources on the process of selling itself, on things that have nothing to do with production as such, but only with the buying and selling of the products that constitutes trade (on fixing prices, making and receiving payments, transferring money, changing currencies, etc.) And there is also a huge waste in the armed forces and arms that all states are forced to equip themselves with in order to be in a position to protect and promote the interests of the capitalist groups within them.

So inherent to capitalism - the world trading system - is both artificial scarcity and organised waste. And as long as the system is allowed to continue there's nothing that can be done to prevent this. But "another world is possible", and it has to be another *world*, since there are no national solutions to world problems like world poverty, hunger and disease.

The alternative is a world in which all the Earth's natural and industrial resources become the common heritage of all humanity. This means that the production and distribution of the things that people need can be organised on the basis of the world being a single unit. The oil resources won't belong to filthy rich sheiks in the Middle East - or even just to the people living in the Middle East - but to all humanity, to be used for their benefit. The same goes for all the world's other natural resources. They won't be traded. They will simply be transferred from one part of the world to another as required to meet needs. This wouldn't be trade since there would be no question of payment or of any transfer of something of equal value from the part of the world where they went to the part they came from.

Under these circumstances, if people in one part of the world needed food - as is undoubtedly the case at the moment - it would be transferred there, as for instance from the wheatlands of North America. This wouldn't affect local agriculture since there would be no competition between the two; there'd be no local markets to undermine since local production wouldn't be for a market either. In fact, local agriculture could be given the fertilizer and equipment that they need - without demanding any counterpart - so that it can contribute increasingly to satisfying local food needs.

This - no trade, but production for use - is the alternative to both the free trade favoured by capitalist corporations and their agency, the WTO, and the fair trade favoured by the equally capitalism-accepting development NGOs. ■

ADAM BUICK



The rise and fall of money

Many people think that money has always existed and therefore it always will. Wrong. Human beings lived on this planet for hundreds of thousands of years without using money. When they were hungry, they ate. When they were thirsty, they drank. Whatever was available to anyone was available to everyone. It wasn't paradise, because food was sometimes scarce, and growing communities were eventually forced by this scarcity into a competitive struggle for life.

First came the invention of agriculture, and the consequent need to defend the land, or property, on which crops were grown. Although this gave communities more stability and growth, agriculture and animal husbandry could not by themselves supply everything which they needed to develop as cultures. For this they needed to associate with other communities and pool their resources. But in the new culture of property there was never again to be such freedom to take whatever was available.

And so began the exchange of products known as trade. And although some quite advanced bronze age societies managed to trade very well by using barter (e.g. the Egyptians), it was a supremely awkward way to conduct transactions. With the advent of the Iron Age, cheap metal was for the first time plentiful, and coinage was slowly introduced to facilitate the trading process.

Civilisation has since grown up on the back of this trade, whose sophistication was made possible by the invention of money. To the modern mind therefore, civilisation relies on money. This is a misunderstanding. In fact, it is

only trade which relies on money. Civilisation relies on distribution of material goods certainly, but distribution is not the same thing as trade, just as giving is not the same thing as selling. Modern industrial society has given us the means to free ourselves forever from that scarcity which has always dogged our forebears. Money is no longer a necessary or logical feature of society, and only a tiny minority benefit from its presence.

In history, many things become out of date, like the steam engine or quill pens. Money is about to join them. Money is indispensable to the capitalist system, but this system is not indispensable to human society. The possessing of money enables the buyer to acquire goods and services (commodities) and the seller to dispose of goods and services. The key resource that is bought and sold is human labour power - the ability to transform initial wealth (resources, raw material, etc.) into more wealth.

We live in a society where almost everything is bought and sold. That which you need to live is a commodity, you must buy it from someone who will make (or at least expect) a profit out of selling it to you. Not only does the movement of products from producer to consumer come to be mediated by money, but the value of a product comes to be judged not in human terms but in terms of a sum of money.

The key to the rise and continuation of the capitalist system is the ability of members of the capitalist class (owners of means of wealth production and distribution) to buy the working abilities of members of working class. They combine that labour with capital,

resulting in commodities that can be sold for more it costs in total to produce them.

A high proportion of employment in capitalism consists of handling money in some way. There are hundreds of occupations that would not exist in a society that had no need for money. They include accountants, bank and insurance staff, salespeople, wages clerks, to name only some of the more numerous occupations. Tangible products needed only in a money system include bank notes and coins, account books and invoices, meters, safes and many others.

Capitalism as a market system means that the normal method of getting what you need is to pay for it. The normal way for members of the capitalist class to get money is invest their capital to produce rent, interest, dividends or profits. The normal way for workers to get money is to sell their labour-power for wages, salaries, commission or fees. If they are unable to find employment they depend on state or other handouts. The result is poverty in the midst of potential plenty, and actual plenty only for the privileged minority.

Socialism means a world society based on production solely for use, not profit. It will be a classless society, in which everyone will be able to participate democratically in decisions about the use of the world's resources, each producing according to their ability and each taking from the common store according to their needs. In such a society there can be no money - or, more precisely, no need for money. Money is only needed when people possess and most do not.

Imagine that all the things you need are freely available. There is no need to buy food from anyone. There are no rent or mortgages to pay because land and buildings belongs to all of us. There is no need to buy anything from any other person because society has done away with the absurd division between the owning minority (the capitalists) and the non owning majority (the workers).

In a socialist world monetary calculation won't be necessary. Decisions apart from purely personal ones of preference or interest will be made after weighing the real advantages and disadvantages and real costs of alternatives in particular circumstances. The ending of the money system will mean at the same time the ending of war, economic crises, unemployment, poverty and persecution - all of which are consequences of that system.

Reforms of the present system fail because the problems multiply and recur. The revolutionary change that is needed is not possible unless a majority of people understand and want it. It will take time to eliminate hunger, malnutrition, disease and ignorance from the world. The enormous liberation of mental and physical energies from the shackles of the money system will ensure that real human progress is made. ■

A Plan, A Canal, . . .



Above: The S.S. Ancon, the first ship to transit the Panama Canal on August 15, 1914. Below: The US naval presence on the canal

The first proposal to build a canal across some part of the Central American isthmus to link the Atlantic and Pacific dates back to 1529. The Spanish rulers saw it as a way of shortening the time taken to transport gold and other booty from their South American empire to Spain. But nothing concrete was done until the late 19th century, when a French company carried out a great deal of excavation but failed to complete the project.

Then the American government got in on the act. Unfortunately for them, the site of the unfinished canal was within Colombia, which was ruled by 'a government of irresponsible bandits', in the words of US President Teddy Roosevelt. But a revolt in the province of Panama, aided by a US battleship and a load of marines, soon produced a new country, with a government prepared to let the Americans in (for a price, of course). The US Army re-started work in 1904 but the canal was not completed till ten years later. It was a tremendous engineering feat, marked among other things by special attention to avoiding the malaria and yellow fever that had contributed to bringing down the French effort (it's estimated that in all over 30,000 people died in building the 50-mile canal).

Having spent millions of dollars and established Panama as a new nation, the US rulers naturally wanted to gain maximum profit from their canal. Apart from its role in increasing American exports and shortening journey times between New York and California, tolls for using it were paid to the US operators rather than to Panama. American troops have been sent to Panama on a number of occasions (e.g. in 1925 to put down a strike and in 1958 to counter demonstrations). A 1903 treaty granted the Canal Zone to the US 'in perpetuity', but from the 1970s, formal control was gradually handed over to Panama, with this being complete by 1999.

The canal has, however, declined in importance to some degree. An oil



pipeline across the isthmus has cut the number of oil tankers using it, but above all the new super-size ships are just too big for it. In 1982, a commission was set up, consisting of Panama and the two main users of the canal, the US and Japan, to consider improvements. One proposal was to widen the narrowest part of the canal and so increase capacity to fifty ships a day.

Nothing was done then, but there is currently a proposal to widen and deepen the canal, to be financed by the Panamanian government, provided a national referendum gives the go-ahead. The US are again exerting pressure, in none too gentle a way. 'It's in our nation's interest that this canal be modernized,' said President Bush on a recent visit to Latin America. Capitalism's need for reliable routes to transport raw materials and manufactured products remains as pressing as it was when the Panama Canal was first built. ■

PB

At the Bottom of the Heap

The capitalist system, as illustrated by International Worker



The chairman of the Bench had wanted to send Chu Hua to prison, so she had been let out of the dock to speak to the duty solicitor in case he could persuade the magistrates to a less vengeful sentence. Now she sat squirming downwards and backwards into her chair, her dull eyes flickering in fear, clutching her threadbare jacket against the chill of the interview room. She did not look like a criminal who threatened to undermine what all right-thinking people - like magistrates - uphold as the basis of civilised society. It was not that she had cloned credit cards, nor dealt in controlled drugs. She had not sexually abused any children, nor deceived impoverished young women in Eastern Europe into coming here only to find that the well paid jobs they had been promised were really as enslaved prostitutes. She had not murdered anyone, nor robbed a bank at the point of a gun. "So why did you" asked the solicitor, "try to sell those counterfeit DVDs?"

It was sad story, eked out with the help of the interpreter. Chu Hua was born in a remote village in North China; the interpreter knew of the area, that it was deeply impoverished, obviously not borne up by the flood of supposed prosperity of supposed "socialist" China. Chu Hua's parents tried to provide for their family from what little they produced in their vegetable garden. They could not afford to send the children to school so Chu Hua was scantily educated and illiterate, with no prospects of improving in that village. In 2001 she came to England as an asylum seeker, on the grounds that she was a member of the Fa Lung Kung cult. Her application was refused and now she has to report each month to the Home Office Immigration Service, and she is not allowed to take employment or apply for benefit. Sometimes she gets cash-in-hand work as a cleaner but this lasts for only a week or so because she is scared of being reported for benefit fraud. She is reduced

to relying on friends and other contacts for food and somewhere to live, sleeping on floors in a roomful of other people. But bad as this is she thinks it is better than her former life in China.

Cult

On the face of it, the Fa Lung Kung seems to do little more than practise slow, hypnotic, Tai-Chi like meditation exercises - like those hardy early morning groups in many an English park. The problem in China was that it developed into a hugely popular movement with a membership large enough, and ardent enough, for the government to outlaw it as a destabilising influence. At some point it wandered beyond meditation, claiming that its followers can see through a "third eye" which protects them and can cure them of diseases. Such preoccupations, on a large scale, can be addictive enough to affect workers' disciplined acceptance of their role as wage slaves. A ruling class will not be happy to allow too much brainwashing which does not promote their own power and influence over society. At times Fa Lung Kung has been tolerated in China (although it was banned under Mao Zedong's regime as unhealthy and superstitious) but in recent years there has been a fierce crackdown in which the cult's followers lost their jobs or were sent to prison where they were beaten or even killed. As might be expected, the movement spawned a considerable media industry and not a few con artists to exploit anyone vulnerable to claims about mystical powers of mental adjustment to social stress. Even so the mere fact of membership of the cult was accepted in the United States as justification for asylum; as Chu Hua soon found out, that did not apply in this country.

So she spends most of her days wandering along the local High Street and it was there, in an indoor market, that a man who must have noticed her vulnerability suggested that she could earn a little money by helping him sell some DVDs. It was not long before the police saw her - and recognised her as someone who had been arrested twice before for the same offence. Her two previous appearances in Court had resulted in her being ordered to do Community Service, which she had completed happily as it was better than the High Street and kept her occupied, scrubbing off graffiti or cleaning school playgrounds. She must have wondered why she was not allowed to do the same kind of work for a wage. But now this was her third such offence in a short period and the Court was running out of patience with her.

Pirates

The recent explosion in the production and sale of pirated DVDs has alarmed the industry, which sees it as a threat to its profits. The biggest operator in this field is

HMV, which also trades in CDs and owns the Waterstones booksellers. During the last complete year, HMV recorded a pre-tax profit of £136.2 million - up by 9.9 percent on the previous year. Not all of this, of course, came from the sale of DVDs; Waterstones is notorious for its ruthless cost cutting war against independent booksellers and makes huge profits from best-sellers like the Harry Potter books. But DVDs are extremely important to HMV's profits; while the group's underlying sales were down by 4 percent during the last year the sale of DVDs went up, and with it HMV's share of the market for them, of which the group claims to have "the lion's share". So they are bound to take any threat to their pre-eminent position seriously - and that does not mean they worry about a few school-age computer wizards downloading and writing their own, illegal, copies of DVDs to share with their mates.

The copyright laws, with their harsh penalties, are there to aid HMV in their war against the pirates. One local authority recently decided that pirated DVDs and CDs represented so urgent a threat to their community that they formed an alliance with the local police to hunt down the pirates and close down their factories. On one gloriously successful day for the partnership the local plods and council penpushers seized £30,000 worth of illegal DVDs and CDs from one business, then a few days later went to the place again and took possession of another £20,000 worth. During the past year they have "visited" more than 90 premises, seized over 150,000 items, closed down one DVD factory and launched several prosecutions. These achievements are publicised by the council with such pride that some of their citizens may overlook the fact that they do



A golden partnership, both producing criminal records....

not have an exactly successful record when it comes to their other responsibilities. Not long ago this council was assessed, in terms of the services it supplies to vulnerable people such as the homeless, the elderly or children in need, as one of the worst in London, to the extent that they were under threat of being taken over by a Whitehall hit squad.

Priorities

But of course that council was utterly correct in its priorities because the realisation of a profit through the orderly, legally controlled process of production for sale must take precedence over any human need. It is the priority of capitalism and when all is said and done it is what people

like councillors and MPs are elected for - at least as things are for the present. If we had a society with a different priority wealth would be turned out to meet human needs, so that all people would have unfettered access to it, which would be enough to give any self-respecting councillor a seizure. It would be the end of the social arrangements which made it imperative for Chu Hua to come all that way across the world although when she got here it was made plain to her that she was not welcome. And now she is a threat to a mighty corporation like HMV.

In any event Chu Hua's fears overcame her; she took her chance to leave the Court and did not come back. Huffing and puffing, the chairman was openly pleased to have his opinion of her so quickly vindicated and readily agreed to the prosecutor's request for a warrant for her arrest. If she comes up in Court again she will have yet another charge - Failing to Surrender - against her. She is out there somewhere, scraping along somehow, vulnerable to a host of predators. We can only hope she survives. ■

IVAN



Cooking the Books (2)

Marxism and Panda Bonds

To mark the 112th anniversary on 26 December of the birth of Chairman Mao a new, expanded "Marxism-Leninism Academy" was opened in Beijing (*Times*, 3 January). According to Zhang Tongxin, of Beijing University's Marxism Institute, "since reform, a considerable number of people have forgotten that China is a socialist country".

By coincidence, the same day the *Times* reported on a number of financial reforms that came into force in the first week of January. One of them concerned the modernisation of financial markets "to steer more money to profitable projects, not white elephants, and keep the banks on their toes". Already in 2005, the *Times* reminded its readers, China had seen "the launch of a highly successful commercial paper market; China's first asset-backed and

mortgage-backed securities; approval for banks to trade currency swaps and forwards; the establishment of the country's first money broker; the first 'panda bonds' - denominated in yuan and sold in China by international borrowers".

No wonder "a considerable number of people" had come to the conclusion that China is not socialist. And they are right. China is not a "socialist country" but a capitalist one. And it never was socialist. What the Chinese "Communist" Party established when they came to power in 1949 was a state-capitalist regime under their political dictatorship.

The workers and peasants continued to be exploited but, from then on, by a "vanguard" which collectively exercised a monopoly, through its political control, over the state-owned means of production.

Although this state-capitalist regime was relatively successful in developing China's heavy industry and military might, like the similar regime in Russia it proved unable to compete economically against the established capitalist powers such as the US, Europe and Japan. So, again as in Russia, a policy of "reform"

was instituted involving the encouragement of private capitalist enterprise and the more rigorous subjection of state enterprises to market forces. From the point of view of the established political elite, so far this reform has been executed far more successfully than in Russia in that they are still in control of political power and on this basis can still proclaim the lie that China is a "socialist country". Not that anybody believes them any more.

Marx wrote *Capital* to analyse how capitalist society worked with a view to showing how it could never be made to work in the interest of the class of wage workers on whose exploitation for surplus value it was based. He was not writing to advise political parties and governments how to run capitalism. So it is difficult to see what the Chinese government thinks it can get out of studying his writings.

Marx did write, in Volume III of *Capital*, about stock exchanges, financial markets and the like. Basically, he saw these as places where capitalists tried to swindle each other and small investors out of the surplus value that had already been extracted from the workers. Conceivably, Chinese government officials and the millionaires that have come into existence under the "reform" could pick up a few hints from here on how to swindle each other more efficiently.



"Communist" leader Mao

A utopian vision

Omasius Gorgut: Poor Man's Heaven: The Land of Cokaygne. Past Tense Publications. £1.00. (Available from Past Tense Publications, c/o 56a Info Shop, 56 Crampton Street, London SE17. Postage 30p.)



A detail from Bruegel's Land of Cockaigne

The Land of Cokaygne, reprinted as a modernised verse in this pamphlet, is a 14th century utopian image of an earthly paradise, largely created by serfs, which became a popular song or ballad. This pamphlet puts it into context, linking it with other stories and songs of the time and later.

In the Land of Cokaygne there is "joy and green delight". There is nothing good but fruit to bight. Indeed,

"In Cokaygne we drink and eat
Freely without care and sweat,
The food is choice and clear the wine
...no land is like it anywhere,
Under heaven no land like this
Of such joy and endless bliss.

Many fruits grow in that place
For all delight and sweet solace,
...every man takes what he will,
as of right. . .
All is common to young and old,
To stout and strong, to meek and bold."

The author of *Poor Man's Heaven* notes that in most of Europe, in their folk tales and popular songs, the poor of the Middle Ages dreamed up a land where their sufferings were reversed, and where people lived in harmony and plenty without having to work. The Church, however, told them constantly that they could not expect, and should not dream of, a better existence in this life; but that paradise existed for them in another, after death. Utopian dreams appeared not just in England, but in France, in Ireland, in Medieval German legends, in Holland, and in Celtic mythology. The author suggests that early popular medieval utopias may be pre-Christian.

Interestingly, the Land of Cokaygne is enjoyed without effort. It stresses idleness rather than the largely unrewarded labour of the serf. As in much revolutionary utopian thought of the Middle Ages, in Cokaygne there is neither rich nor poor. There is equality says the writer, as in, "When Adam dived and Eve span, who was then the gentleman." Of course, the peasants did not just dream, or sing, of a better world. Often

they revolted, as in England in 1381.

The writer of *Poor Man's Heaven* links the story of Cokaygne with the modern American songs *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* and *Poor Man's Heaven*, where the barns are full of hay and there are streams of alcohol. "There's a lake of stew and whisky too." The singer is "...bound to stay where they sleep all day". And in the *Poor Man's Heaven*:

"There's strawberry pie that's twenty feet high
And whipped cream they bring in a truck. . .
We'll eat all we please off ham and egg trees
That grow by the lake full of beer."

This pamphlet is well worth reading, depicting as it does what, in the past, could only be a utopian vision of a better world.
PEN

Post-capitalist capitalism

Michael Albert: Parecon: Life After Capitalism. Verso, £9.



Participatory economics, or parecon for short, is a vision of life after capitalism favoured by many in the anti-capitalist movement. The author of this particular vision helped to establish Z

Magazine and its web site Zmag (zmag.org), including its subsidiary page devoted to parecon (zmag.org/parecon), which debates the issues raised by this book.

Parecon opposes "corporate globalisation" and argues for its replacement by "equity, solidarity, diversity and self-management." For Albert, capitalism means "private ownership of the means of production, market allocation, and corporate divisions of labour." Life after capitalism is said to combine "social ownership, participatory planning allocation, council structure, balanced job complexes, remuneration for effort and sacrifice, and participatory self-management with no class differentiation." The council structure involves workplaces, neighbourhoods, and "facilitation boards" which co-ordinate planning.

So-called "market socialism" is rejected because the market and class differentials would remain, as would buyers and sellers of labour power (capacity to work). In Albert's account, because class differentiation disappears in parecon, "you cannot choose to hire wage slaves nor to sell yourself as a wage slave." Parecon permits workers to assess their own pay and conditions in their decision-making by inputting their preferences via councils. It

apportions income in accord with effort and "does not force or even permit people to try to maximise profits, surplus, or even revenues."

Notice however that Albert is specifically talking about prohibiting profit maximisation, not profits as such. Profits are acceptable; "excessive" profits are not. In the procedure envisaged, individuals and councils submit proposals for their own activities, receive new information including new indicative prices, and submit revised proposals until they reach a point of agreement. This process is open-ended and in Albert's book a hypothetical example is discussed which reaches a seventh planning cycle, or as Albert calls it "planning iteration." In reviews of this book much has been made of the potential for bureaucracy in this procedure, but a more telling criticism would be its unquestioning acceptance of the profit system. Wages cannot rise to the point which prevent profits being made; and a fall in profits will put a downward pressure on wages. This is called the class struggle.

"Parecon is basically an anarchistic economic vision", admits Albert, and it shows. Like many on the left, the difference between capitalism and post-capitalism presented here is essentially political, not economic. As indicated by the title, the crucial factor is participatory planning. The capitalist economy would remain substantially the same in parecon: the accumulation of capital out of profits produced by the unpaid labour of the working class.

LEW

Another question, Mr Morris

Tony Pinkney, ed: We Met Morris: Interviews with William Morris, 1885-96. Spire Books £19.95.



In the 1880s the interview was a fairly new journalist technique, and a range of publications, from *Justice* to the *Daily News* and *Bookselling*, wanted to have William Morris's views on a variety

of topics. Most of the thirteen interviews gathered here took place in Kelmscott House, his residence in Hammersmith. The result is an interesting view of Morris as a person (generally dressed in a blue serge suit and smoking incessantly) as well as an insight into his opinions on political and other matters.

In 1885, Morris gave his reasons for leaving the Social Democratic Federation to help form the Socialist League. The SDF had been run 'arbitrarily', and it was heading towards 'political opportunism tinged with Jingoism'. The League, in contrast, would 'uphold the purest doctrines of scientific Socialism, and...educate and organize towards the fundamental change

in society'. In an interview from 1890, Marx is given credit for starting off the Socialist movement on scientific lines, and for showing that Socialism is 'the natural outcome of the past'. There is a pleasant image of Socialism having 'a public library at each street corner, where everybody should read all the best books, printed in the best and most beautiful type'. An 1894 criticism of anarchism is backed up by the argument that it is important to get control of parliament rather than attempting an insurrection (a contrast with his earlier opposition to parliamentary methods).

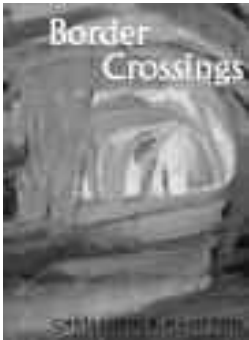
But this same interview acknowledges 'the wisdom of the S.D.F. in drawing up that list of palliative measures', i.e. a policy of reformism, something which Morris himself had previously rejected. In 1885 he also talked of the need for leaders, though it is not entirely clear what they are to do other than explain Socialist ideas, so this can hardly be taken as support for a Bolshevik-style vanguard. An interview with a woman journalist reveals some views which, to put it kindly, show that Morris was a man of his time: 'I feel very strongly that a working man's wife is needed in her home, and it is a pity when she has to leave it to compete in the labour market.' (Shades of *News from Nowhere*, where it seems to be the women who do the housekeeping.)

It helps to have some previous acquaintance with Morris' ideas and writings, but this is a well-produced volume which shows him in an unfamiliar and revealing light.

PB

Political lines

Christopher Hampton: Border Crossings. Katabasis £7.95.



We don't often review poetry in the *Socialist Standard*, but here is a volume which merits a brief notice at least.

One poem speaks of 'something other than this money system' and of the need to 'make resources work for the social wealth'. Another, in an echo of Brecht's work ('Who built Thebes of the seven gates?'), refers to 'those / without whose skills no cities can be built' - ordinary people, rather than gods or rulers. *The Anonymous Makers* repeats this point: that it's nameless people who have built and grown things, not those who live off their backs. The invasion of Iraq is satirised: 'We've hearts and minds to win and markets to invest'. But all this is spoilt by a poem supporting Allende's Chile: 'this workers' President, this hated workers' state' (hated by the rulers of the US, that is).

Best to remember this volume though for its attempt to supply 'words that cross the frontiers / of hope and failure'.

PB

letters continued

dissolution of the Constituent Assembly when electors placed them in a minority. Bukharin supported the erosion of workers' rights and use of terror against political opponents, whether right or left, including the bloody suppression by Trotsky of the Kronstadt Rebellion which was not led by right wing people, but by Socialists. The workers in Russia enjoyed less rights and freedom than the capitalist West. Bukharin was in this so-called Marxist government. The SPGB rightly calls it state capitalist. The Socialist Party existed in Britain whereas in Russia people of similar views were in labour camps or executed.

ANDREW HARVEY, CARLISLE

Russia and capitalism

Dear Editors,

In the article on the First Russian Revolution of 1905 (*Socialist Standard*, December) you conclude that one of the many lessons to be learnt from that event is that "any worthwhile progress in human society must come, and can only come, from the working class", and "relying on our rulers to initiate worthwhile change is as useless as the Russian peasants' reliance on the Tsar."

This is an unusual argument for a Marxist to make because all Russian (and other) Marxists regarded capitalism as a progressive force notwithstanding the fact that capitalism was introduced into Russia as a direct result of state policy, on the initiative of rulers - from Alexander II's reforms in the 1860s, to Witte's industrialisation program in the 1890s and Stolypin's agrarian reform of 1906.

More surprising is the fact that you fail to mention the one institution in 1905 which was wholly and spontaneously a creation of the Russian working class. This was the soviet or workers' council. Despite its relatively brief life, the Petersburg Soviet in 1905 assumed the character of an organised revolutionary authority and a rival power of government. From that experience Lenin drew the conclusion that the dynamic power of the soviets, under the direction of a group of professional revolutionaries, could be harnessed to bring about a revolution which would change society from top to bottom and ultimately lead to socialism (subject to the victory of socialist revolutions elsewhere in Europe).

In October 1917 Lenin's political tactics succeeded when he wrested power from the Provisional Government and, ultimately, from the soviets themselves. The voluntaristic strain in Marxism represented by Lenin and the Bolsheviks triumphed over the deterministic (and orthodox) strain represented by Martov and the Mensheviks.

Yet you suggest that the main lesson of 1905 is that "no force can cut short the natural development of society until it is ready for change". Do you believe that the

Bolsheviks were not such a force? And if not, what sort of "natural development" are you talking about?

PETER BRYANT, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Reply: We were alluding to the development of capitalism in Russia, which the Bolsheviks were unable to avoid. In fact, they became its agents - Editors.

Questioning everything

Dear Editors,

Your reaction to my letter in the December issue when I said that I restrict my buying to essentials, was very guarded. That was a correct view to take for as I point out in my booklet *Question Everything*, (available without charge from me at 51 Newton Road, Bath BA2 1RW), one should accept nothing without asking what are its implications and whose interests are involved.

You point out that if it caught on employers would be able to pay us less, but they always do so anyway in order to cut costs. What they never see is that if workers have less they can only buy less. Employers see things from their own short term point of view, condemning the unemployed as layabouts and a drain on public funds until they want government support, when one reason they give for having it is to alleviate the suffering of those same unemployed.

The simple fact remains that capitalism needs that we keep buying and when I heard that the economy was slowing I thought that socialists would want to help it to do so further so that capitalism can give way to one that was more efficient.

No system based on the competitive greed, selfishness, aggression and conflicting interests of money can be more than marginally efficient, and in this scientific and technological age in which we can produce anything that we want and send it anywhere in the world without being impeded, distracted and negated by increasing multitudes of financial complexities, the money system has become superfluous, an impediment to everything that we try to do.

Only a moneyless society could be fully efficient.

We need to differentiate between people and societies, between capitalists and capitalism, to stop defeating our objectives by making enemies. We all are humans conditioned by and conforming to our genetic and environmental inheritance so that no one, whether fat cat or beggar can be criticised or blamed for what they are or do. We can advance that inheritance only by developing intellect and reason.

MELVIN CHAPMAN, BATH



Deterministic? Martov

WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
- Can't make it to a meeting?
- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

Join the forum via
www.wsm-socialism.org

Meetings

North East Branch

Meeting on Saturday 18 February,
1.30pm

Newcastle Central Library, off
Northumberland Street. Nearest Metro
station: Haymarket.

Central London

Monday 20 February, 8pm

Branch Meeting to consider Conference
Agenda.

Please note that this will take place at
Head Office, 52 Clapham High St,
London SW 4 (nearest tube: Clapham
North) rather than the usual meeting
place.

More meetings on page 3

**SOCIALISM OR
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See the conquering hero



Religion is not
yet at such a
discount in the
United States
as it is here;
and it is from
America that
Billy Graham
has made his
sallies across
the Atlantic. Dr.
G r a h a m
c o m m a n d s
more real
income than
two or three
E n g l i s h
bishops: and
members of the

British ruling class hurried to give him financial backing
in his tours of this country - among them Mr. Alfred
Owen, the racing-motor magnate, and Major-General
Sir Edward Spears, the Chairman of the Council of the
Institute of Directors, and a director of five companies.
Lawyers, politicians, army officers, all hurry to
Graham's side, and the Prime Minister receives him at
No. 10, Downing Street.

Count me in

The significance of Dr. Graham's success is not lost on
English church leaders. Though his antiquated
theological views are so discredited and exploded that
anyone holding them would be turned out of any self-
respecting theological college, leaders of the Anglican
and Nonconformist Churches rush to climb on his
bandwagon. Prominent Methodists like the Rev. E.
Benson Perkins, and Anglican prelates like the Bishop
of Barking, would three years ago have sooner joined
the Rationalist Press Association than had any truck
with anyone holding Dr. Graham's fundamentalist
views. But nothing succeeds like success, and a man
who gets as many thousand dollars a year as Billy
Graham does merely for preaching must obviously be
on to a good thing. So on to Dr. Graham's platform
troop Benson Perkins and Dr. Gough of Barking: in the
fabulous company of the Graham gospel-singers and
cheer-leaders the reverend gentlemen find that they
can swallow not only Jonah but also his whale.

The church leaders who support Dr. Graham are,
from their own point of view, on the right lines. For it is
only by filling the churches again that the leaders of
organized religion can win back their former high place
in society.

(From an article by Alwyn Edgar, *Socialist Standard*,
February 1956)

Declaration of Principles

*This declaration is the basis of our
organisation and, because it is also
an important historical document
dating from the formation of the
party in 1904, its original language
has been retained.*

Object

The establishment of a system
of society based upon the
common ownership and
democratic control of the means
and instruments for producing
and distributing wealth by and in
the interest of the whole
community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great
Britain holds

1. That society as at present
constituted is based upon the
ownership of the means of living
(i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)
by the capitalist or master class,

and the consequent enslavement
of the working class, by whose
labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is
an antagonism of interests,
manifesting itself as a class
struggle between those who
possess but do not produce and
those who produce but do not
possess.

3. That this antagonism can be
abolished only by the emancipation
of the working class from the
domination of the master class, by
the conversion into the common
property of society of the means of
production and distribution, and
their democratic control by the
whole people.

4. That as in the order of social
evolution the working class is the
last class to achieve its freedom,
the emancipation of the working

class will involve the emancipation
of all mankind, without distinction
of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be
the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of
government, including the armed
forces of the nation, exists only to
conserve the monopoly by the
capitalist class of the wealth taken
from the workers, the working
class must organize consciously
and politically for the conquest of
the powers of government, national
and local, in order that this
machinery, including these forces,
may be converted from an
instrument of oppression into the
agent of emancipation and the
overthrow of privilege, aristocratic
and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are
but the expression of class

interests, and as the interest of the
working class is diametrically
opposed to the interests of all
sections of the master class, the
party seeking working class
emancipation must be hostile to
every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great
Britain, therefore, enters the field of
political action determined to wage
war against all other political
parties, whether alleged labour or
avowedly capitalist, and calls upon
the members of the working class
of this country to muster under its
banner to the end that a speedy
termination may be wrought to the
system which deprives them of the
fruits of their labour, and that
poverty may give place to comfort,
privilege to equality, and slavery to
freedom.

Open prison

On January 1st, police in Britain were given sweeping new powers. Police are now allowed, if they think it "necessary", to hold anyone they suspect of any offence - motorists who are not wearing seat belts, for instance, or who commit the felony of driving in a bus lane, or even your young ne'er-do-well who throws his fish supper wrapper away in the street. Moreover, the police



will be allowed to store a digital photograph of you on a database even if you have been found not guilty of the charge you were originally arrested for.

The Home Office is changing the law because current legislation on what is an arrestable offence is, they argue, "bewildering". So on the one hand you have the Home Office suggesting your average cop is too daft to make his/her mind up as to what is a criminal offence, while at the same time asking the police to make an on-the-spot decision on whether or not it is "necessary" to arrest your average lawbreaker for gobbing his wad of chewing gum onto the pavement.

It's already bad enough that Britain has more CCTVs spying on us than any other country on the planet (an estimated 300 cameras will have watched me when I get back home after a day's bargain-hunting in Newcastle), that the British police have the biggest DNA database in the world, that your

location can be tracked to within 6 feet when you use your mobile phone. But from this March, almost every car journey made in this country will be logged by CCTV and satellite cameras, and stored away for future reference on a police database.

Terrestrial and space-based cameras make it possible for the state to recognise your car number-plates anywhere you go and, we are told, quite soon they will be able to recognise human faces as well.

With 77 percent of MPs now favouring the introduction of a national identity card and the Identity Cards Bill due another vote in the House of Commons, now that the Lords have made their minor amendments, it looks as if the State - 2008 is when Labour seeks to introduce them - will soon have another means of collecting and collating information about us.

It is anticipated that eventually, as well as carrying our photos, biometric ID cards will hold iris scans and fingerprints. Moreover, the database holding all the information on our ID cards would not only be accessible by the police, but open to the immigration service and numerous public and private organisations.

Forgive me for being alarmist, but I'm betting that in a few years every single adult in Britain will have their mug-shot and their entire personal history on a police database; that the day will come when your movements will be logged the moment you leave your home in the morning.

No doubt people, like me, concerned about increased police powers and increasing state intrusion

"An estimated 300 cameras will have watched me when I get back home after a day out in Newcastle."

into our daily affairs will be met with the imbecilic line: "If you're not doing anything wrong, then you have nothing to worry about." This cop-out totally misses the point. In truth this has nothing to do with our innocence. It's all about mistrust; about the state saying we can not trust a single one of you as far as we could kick you. The state is saying you have a brain and are capable of thought, so you are therefore



a potential threat to very powerful interests and

consequently need to be tracked 24/7. This is the state saying they want to know everything about us from the moment we're born until the second our heart stops beating.

When you consider the state has access to the NHS database, to info transmitted each time we use credit cards (the spy in your wallet), to info that will be contained on the coming national id cards, the info gleaned at GCHQ in Cheltenham, at the NSA base at Menwith Hill that scrutinises our phone conversations and scans our email, the info amassed by Echelon, perhaps the most powerful intelligence gathering organization in the world and sponsored by the USA and the UK, then



it's time to sit up and start worrying.

Think not? Consider also the introduction of radio-frequency identification tagging (RFID) which started in stock control and on motorway tollgates in the USA. Supermarkets are now using this technology - electronic chips that send out a code when exited - with companies like M&S and Tesco's investing millions in this new spy hardware. It is anticipated that soon the chips will be small enough to be undetectable in products such as clothing, the carrier being detectable from space.

Our civil liberties are not only being eroded by the day, but the state is intruding deeper and deeper into our personal lives. You can sit back and accept it all as inevitable in this post-9/11 world and reconcile yourself to a lifetime of mind-numbing conformity, inside of your new open prison - for this is what Britain and many other countries are turning into - never daring to think an out-of-the-place thought about the system that exploits you, afraid you may accidentally commit a "crime" on your way to the shops (some security camera catching you walking on the grass or expectorating a lump of phlegm). Or you can organise with others in an attempt to wrest state control from those who use it as a means of utter oppression on behalf of the master class. But don't take too long to think about it - your thoughts may one day not be your own. ■

JOHN BISSETT





Voice from the Back

Lies, Damned Lies And Diplomacy

The misuse of language is an essential part of capitalist politics. Every country in the world has a Ministry of Defence, none has a Ministry of Offence. Lies are described as being "economical with the truth". The bombing of civilians is known as "collateral damage". The US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has recently come up with a new one, "extraordinary rendition". According to the *Times* (4 December) "...it will anger many in Europe." "Extraordinary rendition" means transfer for torture and "enhanced interrogation techniques" means stripped, chained and made to stand up for 40



A pro-active resolutions specialist

hours in a dark, cold cell. It is enough to make socialists "involuntarily eject the contents of their stomachs". If you can accept another euphemism.

So Much For Human Nature

The journalist and author Francis Wheen in his best selling *How Mumbo Jumbo Conquered the World* came up with a great quote from George Orwell: "We are selfish in economic matters because we all live in terror of poverty. But when a commodity is not scarce, no one tries to grab more than his fair share of it. No one tries to make a corner in air, for instance. The millionaire as well as the beggar is content with just so much air as he can breathe. ... So also for other goods. If they were made plentiful, as they might easily



Land, sea, air - no need to be greedy...

be, there is no reason to think that the supposed acquisitive instincts of the human being could not be bred out in a couple of generations." Nice one, George - but of course we want socialism now! To hell with the notion of generations to change.

The Primitive Accumulation Of Capital

In Capital Karl Marx has a very revealing section devoted to the primitive accumulation of capital. He deals with the expropriation of the agricultural population in England and the Highland clearances in Scotland. A recent news item in the *Times* (3 January) shows that this process is still going on in India. "Indian police shot and killed nine tribesmen yesterday in the eastern state of Orissa after they were attacked with arrows and stones, killing a constable, an official said. About a thousand tribespeople, some armed with bows and arrows, who oppose a move by the government to acquire land to set up a steel plant in Jaipur, turned on the police assigned to protect officials demarcating the land for Tata Steel Ltd, India's largest private steel producer." As Honore de Balzac, the French novelist wrote way back in the 19th century, "Behind every great fortune lies a great theft."

For Those Who Have Accumulated

A new magazine has been launched entitled Spear's Wealth Management Survey. It deals with how to buy your own private jet or acquire a vineyard. You are unlikely to have run across a copy though. "Spear Media, publisher of SWMS, hopes to attract a circulation of 25,000 in the UK, with a further 5,000 going to the wealthiest individuals or families across Europe."According to the publisher, "Although we are targeting people who have assets of £5m, the majority will have £10m-plus."



(*Observer*, 8 January) Like we said, you are unlikely to come across a copy.

God's Will

"At least 345 pilgrims were killed yesterday when one of the holiest rituals of haj in Saudi Arabia turned to tragedy. White-robed believers rushing to stone the devil in a symbolic ceremony were caught



up in a stampede and crushed. Many who escaped were seriously hurt, with 289 people reported injured." (*Times*, 13 January) God, Allah, Jehovah or whatever he's called is supposed to be all powerful so we suppose it is all part of the divine plan. In recent years God seems to have been particularly deadly during haj. In 2004 244 killed, 2001 36 killed and in 1998 180 trampled to death. Truly the ways of God are mysterious but that is small consolation to the victims or their families.

A Changing World?

Away back on the seventh of April 1775 an old conservative gentleman, disgusted by the job-seeking antics of politicians recorded a worthwhile notion. "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel", said Dr. Johnson. Now in your newspapers you can read "Gordon Brown is today calling for a 'British Day' on which the country can unite and celebrate its values, setting out the fullest version of his agenda for government." (*Times*, 14 January) Dr Johnson was an old tory lick-spittle but today he looks distinctly principled.

Free Lunch

by Rigg



socialist standard

Journal of The Socialist Party - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

March 2006 Vol. 102 No. 1219 £1

The American Jihad finds a new target



'Real men' want to go to Iran



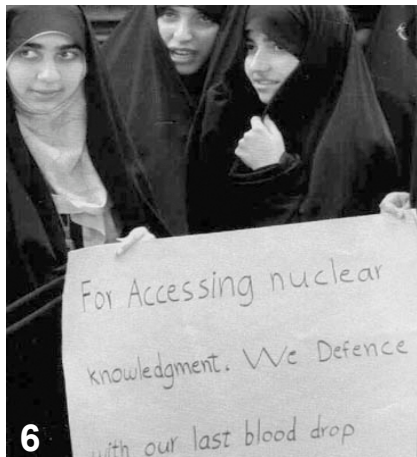
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So says John "Real Man" Bolton to help hype a global crisis which could consequently be used to justify attacks on Iran
- 8 Dirty war in Columbia**
Piers Hobson examines the complex and on-going war between the government's armed forces, drug producers and traffickers, leftist guerrillas and rightist paramilitaries
- 10 Oil: the Niger delta**
70 per cent of the population live on less than \$1 a day, but Nigeria's politicians are living the high life in swank hotels and partying with Shell, Total and Agip.
- 12 Transport 2055: the missing scenario**
A semi-barbarous future of kalashnikovs and horses and carts, or a perpetual energy paradise? Britain's destiny as conjectured by ... the government!
- 13 Post Office Workers Unite Across the Sectarian Divide**
Workers can be split by social or religious divides, but there's nothing like an attack from the bosses to bring them together. In Belfast catholic and protestant march together down the Shankhill and the Falls Road.
- 14 Tourism: sea, sand - and land speculation**
Across the world there is a headlong rush to develop anywhere, anyhow, to make as much money as possible in as short a time as possible

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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 4th March** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.
TEL: 020 7622 3811
E-MAIL: spgb@worldsocialism.org

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The case against censorship

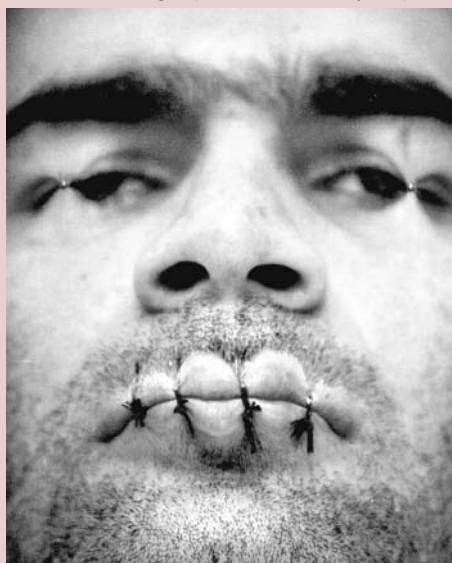
The fuss over the Danish cartoons of Mohammed has not been the only recent event that has raised the issue of free speech. There was also the government's failed attempt to make it more difficult to criticise religion. There were the trials of the BNP leaders and of the Muslim cleric Abu Hamza. The elected mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, was required to appear before an unelected body with the power to eject him from office for a remark made to a journalist from the gutter press. David Irving was arrested in Austria for holocaust-denial. All these were attempts - either by law or by direct action - to punish people for expressing an opinion.

We in the Socialist Party have always insisted on the advantages, for the advancement of the cause of socialism, of the fullest possible freedom of expression of political and social ideas, including when these take the form of religion (since all religions hold views on how society should be organised and are in this sense political). No view should be prevented from being expressed. And no view (not even religion) should be exempt from being criticised.

We have always practised what we preach. We opposed the banning of the *Daily Worker* in 1941. We have criticised the policy of "no platform for fascists" as censorship by direct action. We have debated against fascists and Islamists, exposing their views before their followers to the withering criticism of the socialist case.

The main case against censorship is that it considers that people are too ignorant to decide for themselves and so must be protected from hearing certain views. All

censors, actual or would-be, consider themselves a cut above the rest. They are not corrupted by reading *Lady Chatterly's Lover* but their servants would be. They are not affected by reading anti-Christian or anti-Muslim writings (as the case may be) but



their followers would be. They are not affected by a BNP rant but other, less enlightened people would be.

Since ideas are thrown up by social conditions censorship never works to suppress them anyway. The Catholic Church was not able to prevent the rise in Europe of the secular, practical materialism generated by capitalism and has been forced to accommodate itself to this. The same fate

awaits Islam, which seems to want to rival Catholicism for the title of the world's most intolerant religion. At the moment its clerics are desperately trying to hold back the spread of capitalist secularism - and still have the power to mobilise fanatical mobs to rage against a few harmless cartoons - but, as capitalism progresses more and more in the areas where they now dominate they too will lose influence, painfully slow as this is turning out to be.

In any event, Socialists are opposed to the attempts made by Muslim clerics to prevent and punish criticism of their religion. We are under no obligation to respect the religious dogma of these obscurantists that places the so-called prophet Mohammed beyond criticism, not that he has anything relevant or sensible to say for 21st century conditions.

The last refuge of those who favour censorship is the proposition that people should be legally banned from insulting each other. It is true that if you want to persuade someone to change their views insulting them is not the best way to begin. But you can't legislate for good manners or good persuasive techniques. To allow one side in an argument to cry "you've offended me" and appeal to the law to silence the other side would mean an end to free speech.

Our answer to all censors is to reaffirm that workers are quite capable of judging for themselves, quite capable of sorting out the wheat from the chaff and working out which ideas accord with their interests - and which do not. The best condition for the emergence of socialist understanding remains free and frank discussion.

Contact Details

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON
Central London branch. 2nd & 4th Mon. 7.45. Carpenters Arms, Seymour Place, W1 (near Marble Arch). Corres: Head Office, 52 Clapham High St. SW4 7UN Tel: **020 622 3811**

Enfield and Haringey branch. Tues. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL. email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Mon. 7.45pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: **020 7622 3811**

West London branch. 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

Pimlico. C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge Street, SW1 4VQ. Tel: **020 7834 8186**

MIDLANDS

Birmingham branch. Thur. 8pm, The Square Peg, Corporation Street. Tel: Ron Cook, **0121 553 1712**

NORTHEAST

Northeast branch. Corres: John Bissett, 10 Scarborough Parade, Hebburn, Tyne & Wear, NE31 2AL. Tel: **0191 422 6915** email: johnbissett@blueyonder.co.uk

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<http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

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469994. derricktrainer@freeuk.com

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Tel: **01328 541643**

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462359

Email: matt@wsnwweb.fsnet.co.uk

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Tel: **01792 643624**

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wspboston@mindspring.com



Sorry, Page Cannot Be Displayed

"Your abhorrent actions in China are a disgrace. I simply don't understand how your corporate leadership sleeps at night." Tom Lantos of the US House International Relations subcommittee was pulling no punches when upbraiding representatives of Yahoo, Microsoft, Cisco Systems and Google for their supine acquiescence to the Chinese government's insistence on

strict censorship in their search engines. He further told them that they had accumulated great wealth and power, "but apparently very little social responsibility" (BBC Online, Feb 15). Google recently agreed to block politically 'sensitive' sites and even words, including the word 'democracy', while Yahoo has recently been accused by the media watchdog Reporters Without Borders of handing over information to the Chinese authorities that resulted in an 8 year prison sentence for the writer Li Zhi in 2003 and a 10 year stretch for another writer, Shi Tao, in April 2005.

But with an internet population of 111 million, the largest outside the US, China is hard to resist, and service providers who resist its charismatic charms, or who debate political ethics, are likely to end up in history as footnotes. This is globalisation, after all, and arguably it's not all as bad as it sounds. The accusation that these companies are assisting China to suppress rebellion in return for market share is not entirely fair,

since the world saw graphically how well China was able to suppress open rebellion entirely by its own efforts. Chinese capitalism is moving towards liberalisation because liberal capitalism is cheaper and easier to run than state repressive capitalism, and the entry of western IT into China is the thin end of the liberal wedge, bound even though it presently is by guards and restrictions. And unlike Yahoo, Google shows on its search results page which sites have been blocked, so that users in China do at least know that they are being censored. Wouldn't it be interesting if we knew what information was being denied to us in the West?



PVI PDQ?

Hold the front page! Sex is good for you, says study! Acute stress is relieved by sex, according to new research from the University of Paisley, UK (*New Scientist*, Jan 28). If this sounds like one of those studies scientists frequently conduct simply to prove the galloping obvious, here's the twist - it has to be penetrative vaginal sex, because other forms including masturbation don't work as well, and abstinence doesn't work at all. Of those studied when put in a high stress situation, those who had had exclusively penile-vaginal intercourse (PVI) recovered fastest, followed by those who had had non-coital sex or simply masturbated. Abstainers had the highest blood pressure and took longest to recover. The researcher, Stuart Brody, speculated that the result might be caused by a 'pair-bonding' hormone called oxytocin, released during penetrative sex.

What the study doesn't show, of course, is the states of mind of those involved. It seems logical to Pathfinders at least that those having PVI are also most likely to be those enjoying another, more unquantifiable, phenomenon: love. So could it be love that takes the stress away, rather than the sex?

At any event, capitalism has done the same antisocial thing to sex that it has done to food, clothes, shelter, and all those other little needs of ours - it has commodified it, which means in practice that a very large proportion of the population have no access to it. It will be very interesting, once the brutal and human-hating engine of capitalist market culture has been switched off, to rerun these studies. Pathfinders suspects that there will be a lot more sex, and a lot less stress, all round.

Life Sentence

Further to our recent enquiry (*Socialist Standard*, Feb 2006) concerning the dubious benefit of living longer in capitalism, apparently we can already look forward to the even more dubious appeal of 75 year mortgages and a retirement age of 85 (*BBC Online*, Feb 17).

Shripad Tuljapurkar, a biologist from Stanford University, told the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting in St Louis that anti-ageing advances could raise life expectancy by a year each year over the next two decades. This was, he thought,

going to put a strain on social security and medical care, unless the retirement age was raised. Translated, what this means is that the capitalist class is damned if it's going to pay for workers to have a long holiday from hard labour when they could be nose to the grindstone for another twenty years, or until they drop dead.

The biologist did add that the trend towards longevity would create a "permanent underclass" in poor countries that didn't have the same resources. Sadly, this underclass already exists, and living to the age of 45 would be an achievement for many members of it.



Chadian President Idriss Deby releasing the oil profits from the Chad-Cameroon pipeline.

'Fiasco' in Chad.

Imagine giving a mugger your wallet on condition that he only used the money to look after homeless kittens. This is pretty much what the World Bank did when, in collaboration with Exxon Mobil, it invested \$4.2 bn to develop oilfields in southern Chad and then build a pipeline to pump all this lovely oil through neighbouring Cameroon to the coast.

Now as everyone knows, Chad is a corrupt dictatorship with no record of respecting human rights or giving two hoots about its own poverty-stricken population, but the government was

surprisingly keen to agree to use the profits from all this oil development to invest in social healthcare programmes, a condition the pious World Bank insisted on. Now that the work has been done and the pipeline in place, the Chad government has - shock, horror! - reneged on the deal and used the first profits for what it euphemistically calls 'internal security', ie. suppress poverty-inspired revolts and also, probably, start another war with Sudan (*New Scientist*, Feb 11).

Pathfinders would like to offer its services to the World Bank as consultant (at appropriate fees) the next time it plans to make a deal with a despotic bunch of crooks. Predicting this cock-up would have been easy money. But the suspicion is that the World Bank is not really as naïve as it looks, and that in among the hand-wringing a satisfactory deal has been done. Exxon Mobil, for one, must be crying all the way to the bank.

Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Letters

Wrong about Kenya?

Dear Editors,
We have the following observations on the article "Kenya Referendum farce" (*Socialist Standard*, December).

The struggle for a new Constitution has been going on since Moi took power in 1978. In 1982, the fear by Moi of the setting up of the Kenya Socialist Alliance led the Moi government to convert Kenya into a one party dictatorship. During the 80s, the struggle around the Constitution mainly focused on changing the document to allow for political pluralism. Moi gave in and allowed alternative parties in 1990. But the struggle for a new Constitution continued as Moi continued to use the document to abuse power.

We agree with much of your views that the Constitution will not put food on the table for the exploited workers and the oppressed in Kenya. Our view within the Kenya Socialist Democratic Alliance and which we have repeated several times in the past is that the Constitution is a piece of paper which will be violated by the ruling class if their interests are at stake.

From a Socialist perspective, the Constitution can only matter if the power to implement it rests on the hands of the working class, not the thieving ruling class. Even if another "democratic Constitution" is drafted and passed, it will not solve the problem of mass unemployment, mass poverty, exploitation of workers and peasants in Kenya, collapsed health care system and other social and economic maladies brought about by the rot and decay of the deformed capitalist system in our country.

The "Yes" and the "No" bandwagons have no political alternative because parties represented on both sides are fundamentally liberal. We take the position that the real solution to the crisis in Kenya rests on the establishment of a "Workers/Socialist Party" in the country. At the moment, the

unworkable system of capitalism is not facing any confrontation.

Our support for the "Orange team" was strategic. Kenyans need to do away with "the problem of the Constitution" so that they can realize that a New Constitution is actually not the solution to the political and economic crisis brought about by the thieving ruling class.

You could have come out clearly in the article to assert that Kenya needs a Socialist government or a "Workers Party" armed with a revolutionary socialist Program for change and transformation instead of talking about a "system which has no frontiers".

Your article is good. But your writer should also have attacked capitalism directly instead of talking about a system "where money is being worshiped". By leaving out the dimension of "Socialism" and "Capitalism" in the article (referring to them indirectly) your writer squandered an opportunity to pit Socialism as an alternative against capitalism which needs to be overthrown in Kenya.

We believe that it could have been wrong for us to support the "Yes" side or to sit on the fence as your writer did because the struggle for a new constitution is part of the democratic struggle in our country. While participating in the process, we utilized every opportunity to point out that the Constitution is not the answer to the crisis in Kenya while at the same time pointing out the limitations of the Orange camp which will not be able to go beyond the Constitution to challenge capitalism.

Needless to say, our Comrades on the ground managed to introduce "Mapambano", our Newsletter, as the official slogan of the Orange campaign. Since the Orange leaders will not be able to deliver even if they came to power, a new force will have to come into play and this is the period we are preparing for.

OKOTH OSEWE, SECRETARY, KENYA
SOCIALIST DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE
(www.kenyasocialist.org)

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Real men want to go to IRAN



We'll be watching the news headlines, or maybe there'll be a news flash, and we'll be informed that the RAF, along with the USAF's long-range B-52 bombers, and the Israeli Air Force have carried out overnight bombing raids across Iran, targeting nuclear facilities, radar stations, airfields and anti-aircraft bases.

As in the case of Iraq, there will be the prior attempt at the mass manufacture of consent. Bush and Blair, and indeed any other European leaders who think they will have something to gain, will peddle the line about newly elected Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. They'll say he is another Saddam Hussein who, if Iran's nuclear programme is not halted, will be able to lob a nuclear missile at the West in a few minutes and that Iran is supporting international terrorism, financing terrorist cells all over the world, including Al Qaeda. The case will be made that Iran is still very much a part of the axis of evil, first referred to in George W Bush's State of the Union Address in 2002, and its people, secretly harbouring thoughts of Western-style democracy, are crying out for regime change.

Indeed, it has already started. In his January 2005 State of the Union Address, Bush said: "Iran remains the world's primary state sponsor of terror, pursuing nuclear weapons while depriving its people of the freedom they seek and deserve." The White House has in fact been steadily creating an anti-Iran climate in the US for some time. The *Wall Street Journal* (3 February) reported that "in recent polls a surprisingly large number of Americans say

they would support U.S. military strikes to stop Tehran from getting the bomb."

Both Bush and Blair have already hinted at military intervention and Israel has previously threatened Iran. The *New York Times* (13 January) reported Meir Dagan, the chief of the Israeli Mossad, declaring that "Israeli policy makers all agree that a military option against Iran's nuclear facilities cannot be ruled out". The *Sunday Times* (11 December) had already reported that Ariel Sharon had instructed Israel's air

“there is too much US corporate interest in the Middle East and Central Asia for the US to even think of cutting back on one barrel of oil”

force to get ready for a military attack against Iran by the end of March, when Israeli elections are scheduled. Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the Likud Party, gave notice that if Sharon did not wipe out Iran's nuclear installations, he would see the job was done if he became prime minister in March.

A year ago it was reported that Iran was anticipating an attack by the US and that it was ready for an impressionable

response within 15 minutes. For over a year Iran has been mobilising recruits into citizens' militia and has made plans to engage in the kind of "asymmetrical" warfare that has bogged down US troops in neighbouring Iraq.

Iran has sizeable oil reserves that look quite enticing and which other countries have been eyeing up for some time. The highly regarded *Oil and Gas Journal* reported last year that 125.8 billion barrels of oil were in Iran just waiting to be pumped out. Iran is also the number two producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Most of Iran's crude oil is to be found in an area known as Khuzestan, bordering Iraq and the Persian Gulf and the location of Iran's largest untapped oil fields - Yadavaran and Azadegan. There are serious profits to be had here but, tellingly, the Chinese state oil company China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation has a 50 percent stake in the vast Yadavaran field.

Russia too has a claim in Iranian oil. Three years ago Russia decided to expand its oil procuring and distribution methods by shipping Russian crude to Iran, to be refined for domestic consumption, with Iran delivering a corresponding amount of oil to Russia, thus decreasing the cost of exports via tankers loaded at Black Sea ports and making Russian oil accessible to buyers at competitive prices.

So it's unlikely that Russia and China will agree to a UN Security Council Resolution against Iran which could justify military action if it is thought to have been breached; for they have strong vested interests in Iran which they are desperate



Clockwise, from top: US dead in Iraq and coming home; John Bolton; Iranian military; modern and 'traditional' Iranian women

not to jeopardise. Not that this will bother the US in the least, as both Russia and especially China are economic powers that threaten US global ambitions, so any attack on Iran, which consequently leads to the overthrow of the present regime in Tehran, upsets the long-term ambitions of China and Russia.

Iran would be no push-over. The US would not enjoy a hasty capitulation of the Tehran regime, as was the case with Baghdad, exhausted by over a decade of perpetual bombardment and sanctions. The Iranian army comprises about 350,000 active-duty soldiers and 220,000 conscripts and you can add to this 120,000 of the elite Revolutionary Guard. The country's navy and air force total 70,000 men. Between them, the armed forces have about 2,000 tanks, 300 combat aircraft, and three submarines, hundreds of helicopters and at least a dozen Russian-made Scud missile launchers, the kind Saddam fired at Israel during the first Gulf War of 1991. Iran also has an unknown number of Shahab missiles with a range of more than 1,500 miles. With this in mind you can begin to appreciate the remarks of John Bolton, now the US ambassador to the UN, in the build-up to the invasion of Iraq: "Real men want to go to Iran".

True, a lot of Iran's military hardware is old, thirty years old in some cases, and no match for the state-of-the-art weaponry the US is wont to use. Nevertheless, it is still weaponry and more than capable of delivering untold damage to US forces or any other country within striking distance of its missiles perceived as being pro-US.

With Iran controlling the Strait of Hormutz, oil tankers could easily be bombed as well tankers and platforms elsewhere in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. And Tehran could escalate any conflict, giving the nod for Lebanese Hezbollah militant attacks on Israel, sanctioning also assaults on US interests throughout Central Asia.

Oil Bourse

This month Iran intends to launch its Oil

Bourse which will facilitate the future trade of oil in the euro instead of the US dollar. According to John Pilger writing in the *New Statesman* (13 February) this could have far-reaching consequences:

"The effect on the value of the dollar will be significant, if not, in the long term, disastrous. At present the dollar is, on paper, a worthless currency bearing the burden of a national debt exceeding \$8trn and a trade deficit of more than \$600bn. The cost of the Iraq adventure alone, according to the Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, could be \$2trn. America's military empire, with its wars and 700-plus bases and limitless intrigues, is funded by creditors in Asia, principally China. That oil is traded in dollars is critical in maintaining the dollar as the world's reserve currency. What the Bush regime fears is not Iran's nuclear ambitions but the effect of the world's fourth-biggest oil producer and trader breaking the dollar monopoly. Will the world's central banks then begin to shift their reserve holdings and, in effect, dump the dollar? Saddam Hussein was threatening to do the same when he was attacked."

Likewise, Krassimir Petrov, Professor of Economics at the American University of Bulgaria, writing of the establishment of an Oil Bourse in the January edition of *Energy Bulletin*, said:

"In economic terms, this represents [a great threat] because it will allow anyone willing either to buy or to sell oil for euros to transact on the exchange, thus circumventing the US dollar altogether. Europeans will not have to buy and hold dollars in order to secure their payment for oil, but would instead pay with their own currencies. The adoption of the euro for oil transactions will provide the European currency with a reserve status that will benefit the European at the expense of the Americans ... The Chinese and the Japanese will be especially eager to adopt the new exchange, because it will allow them to drastically lower their enormous dollar reserves and diversify with euros, thus protecting themselves against the

depreciation of the dollar."

Addicted to oil?

George Bush, in his January 2006 State of the Union Address made an interesting statement: "The US is addicted to oil". That's perhaps the truest statement Bush has ever said, but he's mistaken if this is meant to signify that the US is going into detox and will be weaning itself off oil. At the moment there is just too much US corporate interest in the Middle East and Central Asia for the US to even think of cutting back on one barrel of oil.

Furthermore, there are dangerous competitors out there, who have an insatiable thirst for oil, so it's important that the US has a say in who has access to the world's oil resources. The US is not that dependent upon Middle East oil for its own domestic consumption, but is aware that one way to control its foremost economic rivals is to influence just how much oil they can have and at what price. With China a fastly growing economic, political and military power, naked aggression is a strategy the US has been and will continue to be prepared to pursue throughout the oil rich regions of the Middle East and central Asia, regardless of the cost of life and the dent to the US's global image. The dollar needs defending, the world's oil resources need to be controlled and military bases built. Dealing with Iran is just one move in the US game-plan to maintain its global hegemony - the real enemy is yet to be confronted.

But for now Washington will use its man at the UN, John "Real Man" Bolton, to help hype a global crisis which could consequently be used to justify attacks on Iran, with or without the blessing of the Security Council. No evidence exists as to Iranian desires to create an atomic bomb, but the country is enriching uranium - legally, as a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which some pro-US nuclear states have refused to sign up to. This is the excuse that is being used to whip up support another war for oil. ■

JOHN BISSETT

Dirty war in Colombia



Above: FARC. Below: ELN; SINALTRAINAL; Student graffiti at the National University in Bogota that reads: 'Because I love life, no Coca-Cola'



Workers in Colombia are amongst the poorest in the world yet live in an area rich in natural resources. Colombia's complex and on-going war between the government's armed forces, drug producers and traffickers, leftist guerrillas and rightist paramilitaries, with blurred distinctions between each side, continues. Trade unionists, students, activists, journalists and those accused of collaborating with any side in the conflict are potential victims, not just combatants. This is not only a civil conflict, for following the globalisation of capital we see the globalisation of the means of defending capital: war.

In the late 1980s the Andean Group of governments further liberalized investment regulations to ease the repatriation of profits from foreign investments and to allow a greater foreign involvement in the national economy. This led to the Andean Pact free trade agreement in 1992. The most recent figures show that free-trade capitalism has done little to benefit workers in Colombia. World Bank figures show that the national poverty rate declined from 65 percent in 1988 to 64 percent in 1999. According to the FAO, the number of undernourished people in the population decreased from 6.1 million in 1990-92 to 5.7 million in 2000-02. If this is the World Bank's current motto of 'A World Free of Poverty' in action, then Colombians will be waiting several decades before they even have enough food to eat in a country with the some of the richest natural resources on the planet.

In the late 1980s, when Colombia began to attract British capital, Margaret Thatcher sanctioned military assistance to Colombia's notorious armed forces. This assistance continues to this day. Despite the efforts of journalists and activists, the British government refuse to disclose the full amount and nature of all the military assistance given to Colombia's armed forces. It is known that British military officers have trained their members in the UK as well as in Colombia. The UK government has also aided the Colombian government to set up the National Intelligence Centre a co-ordinating body for the Colombian security forces. The UK government has also sanctioned arms sales to Colombia; indeed Colombian delegations have attended the Defence Systems and Equipment International Exhibition (DSEi) in London and Farnborough International Airshow at the invitation of the Ministry of Defence. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued arms export licences to the value of £3.5 million in 2004. The British government can refuse to allow export of arms, for example, on the basis of risk of use for internal repression, risk of contributing to internal tensions or conflict

in the recipient country or the preservation of regional stability. Perhaps the case of Colombia is an administrative oversight.

US security assistance amounted to \$98 million in military financing, \$1.7 million for military training and education and \$474 million for counter-narcotic operations in the 2004 financial year. Corporations are also thought to make donations to the Colombian military.

The US Department of State's Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004 state that members of the security forces continued to commit serious abuses, including unlawful and extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances. Also police, prison guards, and military forces mistreated detainees in harsh, overcrowded and underfunded prisons. State security forces were responsible for 124 extrajudicial killings during the first six months of 2004 and at least 17 of the 65 cases of forced disappearance. Victims are often portrayed as guerrillas killed in combat.

One of the controversial aspects of US-funded counter-narcotic operations involves the eradication of coca and opium poppy plantations by aerial herbicide spraying. The US Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs reports that 2004 was the fourth consecutive record-breaking year of aerial eradication: 136,500 hectares of coca and 3,061 hectares of opium poppy were defoliated. The use of broad-spectrum, non-selective herbicides means that not only is coca and poppy production affected but also food crops, pasture and forests, to say nothing of the possible effects of large amounts of herbicide on livestock and humans. The illicit crop eradication programmes have simply meant that new areas are brought into cultivation. The result is that the increasing destruction of immensely diverse natural forest as farmers are displaced by removal of their means of living and by poorly targeted spraying. Some compensation is available as part of the eradication programme but is inadequate when set against the losses, and not enough to act as a disincentive to further planting of illicit crops.

Commentators have suggested that US-funded counter-narcotic operations are little more than an attack on the financial supply lines of the guerrillas. Quoted in the New York Times last year, a spokesperson from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy said 'Key indicators of domestic cocaine availability show stable or slightly increased availability in drug markets throughout the country'. It seems that the eradication programme has had little effect on the supply of cocaine within the USA.

The Caño Limón oilfield in the

Arauca region, which accounts for 30 percent of Colombia's oil production, has seen some of the greatest violence in recent years. A pipeline which pumps oil to the Caribbean for export has been a major target for guerrilla forces seeking payment for not sabotaging the pipeline. The 18th Brigade of the Colombian military is funded and trained by the US government and an oil company has been accused of abuses against civilians and of co-operation with paramilitaries. Health workers, trade unionists, teachers, journalists and activists as well as members of displaced peasant communities who lived near the pipeline have been victimised by the both the military and paramilitaries.

The US State Department and Amnesty International both state that despite the near impunity with which military personnel carry out atrocities, they continue to fight a 'dirty war' by collusion with paramilitary groups. The extent to which this occurs is unclear, reports vary from the merely sharing intelligence to paramilitaries and the military being trained, transported, armed and fighting together.

Paramilitaries were responsible for numerous violations of international humanitarian law and human rights according to the US Department of State's Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004. There are approximately 12,000 paramilitary fighters in Colombia, mostly members of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), a coalition of paramilitary groups. Though officially the AUC is demobilising and announced a ceasefire in 2002 more than 1,800 killings and disappearances have occurred since then. Paramilitaries were responsible for at least 304 of such killings during the first six months of 2004, including journalists, activists, trade unionists, indigenous leaders, local politicians and others who threatened to interfere with their drug trafficking activities or those suspected of collaboration with guerrillas. There are also reports that paramilitaries continued to commit 'social cleansing' killings of prostitutes, drug users, vagrants, and the

mentally ill in city neighbourhoods they controlled.

One of the most well publicised aspects of paramilitary killing in Colombia in recent years involved the Coca-Cola company. SINALTRAINAL, a Colombian food and drink workers' union, claim that members and their families have been abducted, tortured and murdered by paramilitaries hired by the management of Coca-Cola bottling plants. With no means of redress in Colombia, the union with the help of the United Steel Workers of America and the International Labor Rights Fund attempted to bring a case against Coca-Cola in Florida under the Alien Tort Statute and Torture Victim Protection Act. The court found the Colombian government complicit with the paramilitaries but absolved Coca-Cola of responsibility as the bottling companies were separately owned, despite Coca-Cola then being the major shareholder in the company. The union's case against the bottlers is unresolved. Since the beginning of the case SINALTRAINAL have called for an international boycott of Coca-Cola products.

The paramilitary groups and guerrillas have their roots in *La Violencia*, the war of 1948-1957 between supporters of the oligarchic landowners and supporters of a liberal state and land reform. At the end of *La Violencia* several independent republics existed within Colombia. The armed forces of the state, supported by the US military, took these areas by force. From one of these republics known as Marquetalia, the creator and future leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) emerged with a small band of guerrilla fighters to continue to fight against the official parties who had now formed a power-sharing coalition. It was later that they aligned themselves with the Colombian Communist Party (PCC). FARC and the PCC severed links in the late 1980s. However, despite the differences between Marxism and the PCC's Leninism, and the obvious discrepancies between FARC's openly stated political programme and that of

Marx, FARC and the smaller pro-Cuban National Liberation Army (ELN) are often referred to as 'Marxists' in the popular press. In fact, FARC declare themselves to be Bolivarian and call for 'Colombia for Colombians, with equality of opportunities and equitable distribution of wealth and where among us all we can build peace with social equality and sovereignty', rather than for Marx's call for workers of all lands to unite for the overthrow of all existing social conditions.

FARC and ELN members were responsible for a large percentage of civilian deaths attributable to the armed conflict according to the US Department of State's Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004. FARC are thought to be responsible for hundreds of intentional killings and have injured hundreds of civilians with bombings and land-mines. FARC also kidnap, torture, and murder off-duty members of the public security forces. Both FARC and ELN kidnap hundreds of civilians to help finance their activities. The Colombian Presidential Programme for Human Rights reports that from January to November 2004, the FARC killed at least 99 persons in massacres. Guerrillas targeted local elected officials, candidates for public office, religious leaders, suspected paramilitary collaborators, and members of the security forces.

The war in Colombia reminds us that we are living with a globalised capitalism. The war is of a global nature and not just a domestic war. Tragically most workers still look to a beneficial national government for amelioration of their conditions. However, as long as the social conditions of capitalism exist, and minority ownership of the means of production and distribution, competition to be that minority will all too often turn to war. Be it the benevolent liberal democratic state with a mixed economy, or the free-market economy or a government of nationalized industry free of foreign influence, this has ever been the case. World socialism will destroy the social conditions that create poverty and war. ■
PIERS HOBSON



Cooking the Books (1)

World poverty not yet history

At a meeting in London on 2 February the "Make Poverty History" campaign decided to disband itself. A case of making itself rather than poverty history.

That world poverty most definitely hadn't been made history was illustrated by a news item the previous week. "Global jobless rise hampers efforts to cut poverty", read the headline in the *Guardian* (25 January). "£1.5bn living on below \$2 a day is same as 10 years ago". The article was reporting on the annual global employment survey from the International Labour Organisation. There are some 2.85 billion workers in the world, more than half of whom are existing on less than \$2 a day. The number of unemployed in the world stands at 191.8

million.

When in the 1790s Malthus claimed that the cause of poverty was a tendency towards overpopulation, a view still held by many, he was answered by his contemporary, William Godwin, who was the first to point out that every extra mouth brought with it an extra pair of hands. According to the ILO, there are 192,000,000 pairs of hand in the world that are not currently being used. In a world geared to serving human welfare, these could be put to producing the useful things needed to make world poverty history.

The ILO's sister UN agency, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, estimated, as quoted in a book review in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (30 July), that in 2004:

"852 million people faced chronic hunger, up 15 million from the previous year. And in the same year, according to Unicef, one billion children - nearly half the children in the world - were severely deprived. More than 600 children didn't have adequate shelter, and every day,

4,000 died because of dirty water or poor sanitation."

It was to mobilise people to protest against such obscenities in a world of potential plenty that the Make History Campaign was set up - ostensibly. It now seems that the charities and others behind this were exploiting the good will and empathy with suffering fellow humans that most people feel have, for a passing narrow political end: to bring pressure to bear on the leaders of world capitalism gathered at Gleneagles in Scotland last July to get them to adopt a few much-publicised but ultimately ineffectual measures peddled by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

The phoney "Make Poverty History" campaign may be over - and the charities behind it gone back to trying to empty the ocean of world poverty, each with their own teaspoon - but the campaign to make capitalism (and so world poverty) history continues.

Oil: the Niger Delta crisis

On January 11, 2006, four oil workers were kidnapped in the Niger delta in Nigeria by the militias and were released only after several weeks of negotiation between the local authority and the central government. As in so many other places, the basic issue was oil.

Nigeria's Niger Delta crisis goes back to 1920 and the treaties that the forefathers of the people of the region signed with the imperial masters in Bonny. The Niger Delta spreads out over several states and even before Nigeria's independence in October 1960, there had been serious tensions surrounding the arrangements for the government of the region.

Warri in Delta state is the second most



70 percent of Nigerians live on under one dollar per day.

important oil town in the country after Port Harcourt, the capital of River state. Delta state produces approximately 40 percent of Nigeria's oil, and it is the richest state in the Nigerian federation. Its capital is Asaba near Onitsha, the biggest commercial market in Africa. But Warri town is claimed by three ethnic groups. Port Harcourt, the capital of River state, has a mixture of small ethnic groups.

When you look at the situation in the Niger Delta, you will see reasons why they took fighting the Nigerian federation. The Niger Delta has been devastated by pollution from oil spillages. Shell has caused a lot of destruction on their land. Capitalism is only interested in making profit at the expense of the poor masses. These people have no shelter; no food, no electricity, no hospital, no school, no road, even no water for them to drink.

This struggle started in the sixties when the late Major Isaac Adaka Boro, a renegade Ijaw soldier, declared an Ijaw secession in February 1966. After him came the writer Ken Saro Wiwa. He fought against environmental pollution in the Niger Delta under the junta of General Sanni Abacha. He was tried and condemned to death by hanging in the late 90s. Recently, Alhaji Dokubo Asari, leader of Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force (NDPVF), started a rebellion against Nigeria. The NDPVF has been in existence since the late 1980's but not on as high a level as today.

The Niger Delta oil is shared in the following ways by the political bandits: Shell owns 30 percent, Total (formerly Elf) 10 percent, Agip 5 percent. The rest goes to Nigeria and the private partners in business.

According to OPEC, Nigeria's total oil production is 2.018 million bpd per day. And a barrel of oil cost \$30 to \$35. Where is the money from oil since the sixties till today?

The Niger Delta crisis has been going on for years but no government in Nigeria has taken the problem seriously. The people have been appealing to the government to negotiate by a peaceful political process on how to increase the little percent of oil revenues that was given to them but the government never bothers to deal with the request or the suffering of the people. And that is capitalism for you.

On December 30 1998, some unarmed Ijaw youths went on a peaceful demonstration to express their grievances to the military administrator of Bayelsa state to tell the multinational oil corporations operating in Ijaw lands and territorial waters and indeed in the larger Niger Delta to pack and leave. Instead of calming the youths down and passing their message to his boss, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, the governor ordered his military boys in the state house (which was built with oil money) to open fire on the protesters. And some protesters died and some were wounded from the gunfire. And that made the youths to go wild in their struggle.

President Abubakar and the governor who were being paid their salary from the tax collected from the poor people, moved in artillery pieces, tanks and armoured personnel carriers, as well as fast attack amphibious craft with 700 soldiers to kill their fellow compatriots whose gold and glass skyline rose out of the Delta's wealth of poverty.

The current president, Obasanjo, promised the Niger Delta that if he was elected, he would introduce a comprehensive development plan for them. But, all those promises were false; after all what did he do when, as General Obasanjo, he was head of state from 1976 to 1979?

The Nigerian military regimes have stolen so much money from the country that they have impoverished it. Each time the Niger Delta people protest, the government refers them to the secretary to government





Ken Saro Wiwa, spokesman of the Ogoni, hanged for his opposition to the Shell-backed government

or the minister of petroleum resources or some other officials who really have no capacity to take decisive steps to address the problems.

The stealing of the Nigerian mineral resources by few groups of political bandits at the helm of government has caused Nigerians to drench in misery and abject poverty. These politicians are happy to drive Lincoln navigator, Lamborghini, limousine, Cadillac, Ferrari, helicopter and jets. Whereas millions go to bed on an empty stomach in this one world. And thousands of people squeeze themselves into dilapidated buses that have no roadworthiness again or technical control.

The oil in Niger Delta is enough to sustain born and unborn Nigerians happy till eternity if properly shared among the people. Not to mention other mineral resources like coal in Enugu, rubber in Benin, cocoa in the West, palm produce, precious stones, tin ore, bauxite and even groundnuts, etc.

Because of the government negligence to the masses, unemployment is massive. Master's degree holders from reputable universities have devised their means of surviving by using motor-cycle to carry passengers for commercial purpose. Armed robbers are terrorising the poor masses. There is no security of life and property as a result of capitalism.

Today the political juggernauts who

were elected to improve on the standard of living of the people are now using the resources of the people to buy property overseas. The majority of the Nigerian politicians often have up to ten executive cars in their homes. Some even have helicopters and private jets, all at the expense of the poor masses. Without talking about their special suites in the Nicon-Noga hotel and Sheraton, all in Abuja for free at the expense of the masses from the Niger Delta oil.

The Nigeria finance minister, Mrs Ngozi Okonji Iwuala, is working tirelessly to retrieve the millions of money that was sent overseas by our political leaders, whereas millions of Naira are lying on her doorstep from these corrupt politicians. These politicians don't pay taxes or rates. They are institutions and untouchable. Nigerian politicians drive their cars freely on the roads without police control because they all have police escorts that are always

with them. But, for a poor Nigerian to travel from Lagos to Enugu or Owerri or Umuahia or Abakaliki or Uyo or Calabar is like trying to get into heaven. The Nigerian police and the tax collectors are everywhere in the Niger Delta to the Eastern Nigeria roads stopping commuter buses and taxis every hundred metres demanding for tax and rates from the

people whose resources are taking overseas by the capitalist leaders.

It was because of the nonchalant attitude of the government, the marginalisation of the Igbos and other minorities in non power sharing, together with outside capitalist interference, that triggered the declaration of independence by Biafra in 1967. And today many are rising against the state, such as Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Oduduwa Peoples' Congress (OPC) for the Yorubas. Also, the Arewa Republic for the northerners. Today, many Nigerians are no more thinking of one Nigeria but thinking of their own state secession.

Remember too that the oil that is produced in the Niger Delta costs more money to buy in Niger Delta than in Abuja or in Sokoto, which is about 3500km away from Port Harcourt. Capitalism has no soul or respect for humanity in this one world. Capitalism in Nigeria should be totally eradicated from our society otherwise there will be more kidnapping, armed robbery, guerrilla attacks by militias, strikes, violent demonstrations and anarchy that can lead to total collapse of Nigerian federation like Yugoslavia. The cruelty of capitalism in Nigeria is so cumbersome that 70 percent of Nigerians live on under one dollar per day. While a privileged minority of capitalists and corrupt politicians live more like Bill Gates.

Many Nigerians are running away from the country in search of white collar-jobs in the West because of abject poverty, political crisis and ethnic and religious inquisitions that the government cannot control. In the process, many have died in the desert or on the sea trying to cross border to the West. Many are languishing in prisons in Europe and America, just on immigration offences. Nigerians in the diaspora and at home should rise against imperialism and take the challenge upon them to address the raging crisis in Nigeria for the interest of our people through a political and economic revolution. ■

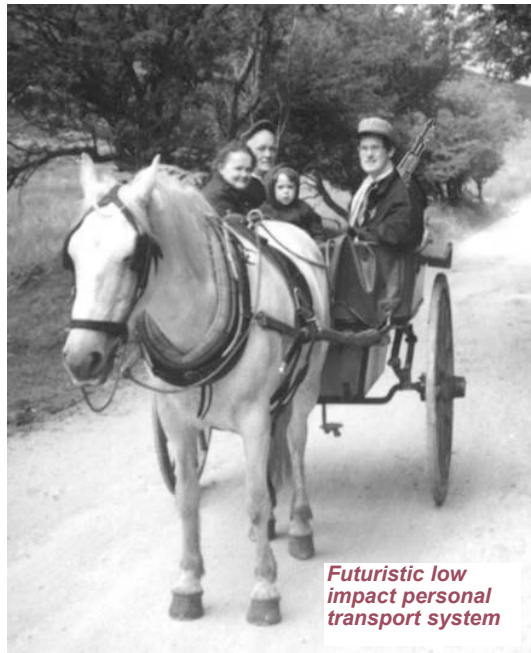
BAMIDELE C. ILOANYA

The Nicon-Noga hotel in Abuja, where rooms cost slightly more than a dollar a day.



Transport 2055: the missing scenario

In 2020 a global economic slump as severe as that of the 1930s breaks out leaving millions of unemployed in all countries. By 2022 GDP in Britain has fallen by a fifth to 80 percent of its previous level. Two years later the UK banking system collapses. Power cuts had already been routine, as in Third World countries today. In the years that follow GDP continues to fall and most people, to survive, leave the cities and settle in small communities that have to be as self-sufficient as possible, bartering with other communities for what they can't produce themselves. Some local transport is still by car but most is by bike or horse. Armed bands roam the roads between communities, and the communities have to protect themselves by equipping some of their members with Kalashnikovs. By 2043 the population of Britain has fallen from its present 60 million to only 42 million, as a result of millions migrating to other countries and millions of others dying either from sickness and disease or in armed clashes and massacres.



Futuristic low impact personal transport system

This is a scenario painted in a document published in January by a government thinktank, Foresight, which is attached to the Department of Trade and Industry, entitled *Intelligent Infrastructure Futures: The Scenarios - Towards 2055* (www.foresight.gov.uk). It is one of the four "possible futures" described in the document prepared to inform government decisions on transport policy. The other scenarios are not so nightmarish as the one above dubbed "**Tribal Trading**" by the government's futurologists. There are also "Perpetual Motion", "Good Intentions" and "Urban Colonies".

Perpetual Motion is a scenario based on the assumption that a viable alternative to carbon-based fuels for powering transport other than aviation has been found (in hydrogen). No restrictions on the use of personally-owned vehicles for individual transport are therefore necessary. At the same time Information and Communications Technology continues to develop, making possible "telepresencing" (a combination of videoconferencing and virtual reality to allow a virtual meeting where people are "present" as holograms), so reducing the need for business travel. ICT also allows people to be "always on", twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. "Even low-paid service workers are so used to being 'always available' that their holidays are no longer a real break". As a result, already by 2020, stress is "the new obesity". By 2050 over 90 percent of UK citizens are equipped with an electronic ID device "that does everything from advise them on entitlement to public benefits to alerting them when their children leave the school grounds".

The **Good Intentions** scenario assumes that oil continues to be the main source of fuel for transport and that a Kyoto-type agreement on limiting carbon emissions is eventually signed by all countries and enforced by the threat of UN sanctions. As a result the government is forced to confront the right-to-drive car lobby and impose restrictions on the use of private cars. This is assumed



to take the form of each person being allocated an individual carbon-use entitlement which can be traded for cash: "After bitter political conflicts, sometimes

violent, a tough national surveillance system means that people only travel if they have sufficient carbon quotas - and these are increasingly tightly rationed". This doesn't just apply to driving a car. The "carbon credits smart card" is "needed by any citizen who wishes to use any kind of carbon resources, from having a shower, to driving, to eating out, to listening to a digital music system".

The assumption underlying the **Urban Colonies** scenario is that the government does actually carry out the green agenda politicians are always talking about and "put clean environment practice at the heart of its economic and social policies". Most people live and work in more compact cities than today. Car use falls and is replaced by walking, cycling and public transport. "Local electric vehicles are ubiquitous". More food is grown locally, so reducing the need for transport. "Everything either gets recycled as a raw material for another production process, or returned, clean, to the earth or water. Every council runs its own 'freecycle' scheme to help people who have things they want to dispose of find a willing recipient". In 2026 a Consumer Goods Act is passed requiring all goods to be repairable. The use of open source software is widespread and "the public Internet is used only for public messages". The result is "a world in which the main aims of policy are to reduce energy consumption and eliminate waste", where "corporations have retreated from the high water mark of influence they enjoyed at the end of the 20th century".

Foresight organised a number of workshops at which their scenarios were discussed. Perpetual Motion appealed to "the business community" and the technological optimists amongst the scientists, though Good Intentions ("too much, much too late") was seen as "in some respects the most plausible scenario".

Surprisingly perhaps, the final outcome of Tribal Trading - decentralised "community-based schemes to grow food, with bartering and alternative currencies coming to the fore" - was not seen as unattractive by everyone. An outside futurologist is cited as



A modern hydrogen engine

claiming that some (presumably, Deep Greens) see this as having much in common with their aim of "ecocommunalism", though of course preferring a more planned and orderly transition to it than that set out in Foresight's scenario (though quite how the population of Britain could be reduced from 60 million to 42 million within less than forty years - by 2043 - without some enormous catastrophe is hard to see). Most workshops participants, however, saw this scenario as the least likely to happen, on the grounds that political action would be taken to avoid the event assumed to precipitate it (the sudden end of the Oil Age), even if this took the form of the "use of military force to secure additional energy supplies".

The first two scenarios - Perpetual Motion and Good Intentions - both explicitly assume the continuation of capitalism. Mobile phones and hand-held computers linked to the Internet will have their use in any future society, but the main use Foresight envisages for them is to order and pay for goods and services; at the same time they serve as a means for firms and advertisers to keep tabs on what people are buying - and for the state to keep tabs on what they are doing. A society in which workers would be subjected to such Big Brother surveillance and be forced to be available to work 24/7 is another nightmare scenario. As is one

where people have to acquire "carbon-use units" just to eat out or have a shower.

The only scenario that has any sort of attraction is Urban Colonies. But, given capitalism, this is the least likely to happen as its attractive features are precisely the ones that go against the logic of capitalism. It would still be capitalism, but a capitalism unrealistically assumed to have been tamed and humanised by taxes and government action. A capitalist world in which the main aim of policy is to reduce energy consumption and eliminate waste rather than to maximise profits? A capitalist world in which corporations have lost the influence they now have? The Internet under capitalism freed from advertising? Futurologists are allowed some flights of fancy, but this is ridiculous.

To be fair, Foresight themselves point out that this scenario "carries with it an implicit critique of market capitalism and conventional economics". They also claim that among its "guiding spirits" might be included "the Victorian socialist, William Morris". If Morris had to choose just between the four scenarios on offer he might well have chosen this one, but he wouldn't have regarded it as socialism. He once asked why in a socialist society would a law against adulteration be needed since no one would then have any reason to adulterate food. Such a law only makes sense in a society based on competition for profits where some firms will always be tempted to take this short cut to profitability. Much the same could be said of the 2026 Consumer Goods Act passed to force firms to produce products that are easily repairable. Why in a socialist society would anyone want to produce something with welded or moulded parts just so that people have to get a new one if it breaks down (quite apart from wanting to make something scientifically calculated to break down earlier than it need)?

Foresight have missed out one other "possible future": a

scenario in which sometime in the course of the next fifty years a world-wide political movement sweeps away capitalism and production for profit and ushers in a society based on the common ownership and democratic control of productive resources. On this basis humans are in charge of their social environment and what they decide to do can be implemented without coming up against the barriers of profit and the market or the vested interests of an entrenched propertied class.

In the field of transport, it can be imagined that a "right to mobility" is available to everyone by means of a comprehensive and efficient free public transport system and access to free public vehicles. This could involve, in an urban context, a hydrogen-powered automatic transit system, flexible and demand-responsive public vehicles which are a hybrid between buses and taxis (both as in the Urban Colonies scenario, but free), supplemented by a fleet of public self-drive vehicles for hiring without charge when needed for a specific journey or period. Under these circumstances, privately-owned vehicles for the exclusive use of one person or family would not be necessary and the congestion and pollution caused by present-day dependency on private cars for travel avoided. All this would be in the overall context of a society where production would no longer be for sale on a market with a view to profit, but for use so that only good-quality, easy-to-repair products would be made and, as a society geared to serving human welfare, clean environmental practices would be adopted as a matter of course.

This of course is only a scenario. But at least it does better than the Foresight document with its three nightmares and one non-starter. ■

ADAM BUICK

Post Office Workers Unite Across the Sectarian Divide



On 1 February postal delivery personnel at Royal Mail's main sorting office in Tomb Street, Belfast went on unofficial strike, claiming one of their colleagues had been accused of bullying and that procedures not provided for in the agreed disciplinary guide lines were being used by management and these amounted to bullying.

A counter-claim of harassment and bullying was immediately made by management but the strikers' demand for an independent inquiry was aggressively refused with the usual strike-breaking formula that there could be no talks until the strikers returned to work.

Whatever the facts behind the conflicting claims, Post Office management immediately launched a bellicose broadside against the postal delivery staff, obviously confident that the threat of legal action would bring the workers to heel. However, there is a

growing sense of frustration among many workers at Tory and Labour Party laws aimed at crippling traditional defensive strategies and, in this case there is no doubt that threats and managerial tough talk promoted an insignificant incident that should have been solved in-house into a serious dispute now, as we write, entering its third week and bristling with angry exchanges.

In a move that is certainly not calculated to promote a peaceful settlement of the dispute Post Office management have announced that they are bringing in fifty managerial strike breakers from England. The intent of that threat might be judged by the total inadequacy of fifty such heroes to substitute for some three hundred staff familiar with the territory. Again, management pulled out of a meeting with union officials on 12 February when they learnt that local union officials would be part of the union delegation. Negotiations have now moved to London and since it is an unofficial strike that means that local staff will not be represented.

Post Office Management's tactics seem a classical example of how not to resolve an industrial dispute; indeed, its entire strategy most raise considerations of a wider hidden agenda.

One striker interviewed by a Belfast Telegraph reporter in the second week of the strike said he had already had to borrow money from his brother to meet the needs of himself and his family. 'It's starting to bite for us', he said, 'we didn't go into this lightly. It's the coldest time of year, why would we choose to do this unless it was the last resort? We are determined to stick it out because there are people's jobs at stake here.'

The so-called 'business community' rail about their potential loss unmindful of the more intense poverty being endured by the strikers and their families, but are now forced to a realisation of the importance of the postmen and women to their business. But support among the general public is strong.

To their very great credit the postal workers have risen above the rotten sectarian values that the political bigots stitch into all kinds of activities in Northern Ireland. The strike started when postal staff from north, west and south Belfast walked out reportedly after an incident involving a worker from the Shankill Road district. Because postal workers have been murdered by sectarian killers and, in the nature of their job are vulnerable to sectarian attacks, it is customary for Catholics to operate in areas identified as 'Catholic' and Protestants to work 'Protestant' areas. Nowhere would this evil necessity be more pointed than in the 'Catholic' Falls district and the 'Protestant' Shankill areas. On the Tuesday following the start of the dispute the strikers marched together on both the Falls Road and the Shankill Road uniquely demonstrating that the class war can transcend the squalid sectarian war and the people in these hard-line areas cheered them.

Anywhere else a few hundred strikers marching up and down the road would have little significance; in Belfast, and especially in the areas in which they choose to march, it probably did more to advance real peace and understanding than all the current vaporising of the politicians. ■

RM



Tourism: sea, sand - and land speculation

We all need a break from time to time but do we ever stop to consider the impact and negative effects on the local communities where we choose to spend our hard-earned leisure time? Do we stop and consider what kind of holiday the people who are servicing our needs on our holiday get, if at all?

The majority of employment opportunities created by tourism worldwide for local populations is that of the low-paid service sector kind. Rarely regular work, and for a few months of the year only with no health insurance or pension contributions and no promise of job security. No thought of a holiday for them - just will there be enough money to last through the lean months, to feed the family, buy new school clothes and books for the kids, or fuel for the winter?

The following observations are based on eight years of being domiciled in a part of south west Turkey.

The small town in whose administrative area I live is but one example of what is happening at an ever-increasing rate in many areas of Turkey and other parts of the world too - a headlong rush to develop anywhere, anyhow, the primary criterion to make as much money as possible in as short a time as possible and never mind the consequences. As everywhere, the few get richer whilst some of the poor sell family land during the boom expecting a one-time sale to provide benefits and long-term security for this and the next generation, expectations far exceeding realistic possibilities in many cases. Teenagers are sent to study at one of the many tourism schools or colleges in order to learn English well enough to enter the world of work in the service sector.

Traditionally, farming was the major occupation in this area, mostly small owner-occupier farms with a few animals. Crops are cotton, maize, sesame, citrus fruits and salad crops. Plus there has always been a small fishing community. Electricity arrived about forty years ago, at about the same time as a tarmac road from the nearby small market town. At that time tourism was virtually unknown, more a backpackers' destination for those prepared to camp out or have access to only basic facilities. Now this has become a destination of choice. A week or two of guaranteed sun, cheap accommodation, food and booze, family holidays, adventure, discos and dancing. Tree-covered mountainsides with fabulous sea views are being cleared to be crowded instead with concrete holiday villages. Rivers, reed beds and formerly remote coves are being polluted by the influx of too many people too much of the time.

Marinas, golf courses, all-inclusive hotels and the inevitable infrastructure needed to connect them to highways and airports; huge road widening projects, tunnels through mountains - great for GDP and jobs in the short term, catastrophe for the environment in the long term.

Now, however, the latest developments move in another direction. Prime farming land is being turned into housing estates for incomers as it is in other areas currently seen to be 'good value' (i.e. cheaper than Western Europe), e.g. Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania etc, etc. The western working class, or some of them, can now afford to saddle themselves with a second mortgage/home, can invest in property in order to cash in later or offer their property for holiday let and probably pay no tax on earned income in either country. There is a feeling of well-being, having succeeded in obtaining a level of affluence once only dreamed of, an affluence entirely dependent on the system continuing to keep them in paid work for years to come. The incomers are perceived as wealthy, their 'second home' here being much bigger and more luxurious than the locals' single, existing and often shared, home. The difference in average wages

the visitors have unlimited money to throw around if they don't question the prices quoted or constantly comment on how cheap everything is in comparison with western Europe; a mix which causes problems of rip-offs and frauds, imagined and real, followed by mistrust on both sides. Resentment is growing. In a national, daily Turkish newspaper there was an article recently referring to ghettoization which said, roughly translated, 'Don't be surprised to wake up one morning to find GO HOME BRITS scrawled on your wall.'

This aspect of 'foreigners', i.e. Europeans, letting their property through the internet or privately but admitting only to owner-occupation (although the truth is clear to others in the neighbourhood) has begun to be a bone of contention with local hotel, boarding house and restaurant owners who see their own business potential declining and income reduced as a consequence of unfair competition. Legitimate businesses have overheads not encountered by private individuals and undeclared income in the capitalist system is seen as theft and unfair advantage.

Outside the central area (where most development has taken place and little farmland remains) some families are keen to sell land to cash in before the bubble bursts but they can only sell it once. Once sold there is no possibility to farm it and herein lies another problem. Why would anyone want to sell good productive farmland? The farming sector is suffering from the unfair market place and falling prices for producers. Tomato crops are being ploughed into the ground. The area once prized for cotton sees less of it grown year by year. Foreign subsidised imports are cheaper for the textile industry. Unless they have a large family to work for free the farmers can't afford to pay pickers (last year at £4 a day) and the crop is left to rot. Some farmers and/or their children are moving into the tourism sector and allied occupations, occupations with low pay and no security. Government, however, has policies regarding tourism numbers etc., as do governments the world over, all seen as large £, \$ or Euro signs. It's the fastest growing industry and therefore to be prized and commended. The money comes into the country; where it goes after arrival is not of primary importance. Laws have been relaxed allowing (encouraging?) the sale of land which was formerly protected from development, even in environmentally sensitive areas.

The rich get richer, the poor - well, we know about that one....

According to received wisdom, for 'richer' read 'more money', 'more buying power', 'ownership' and for 'poor' read 'less money', 'less buying power', 'dependence';



Above: a typical holiday village.
Below: traditional farming methods are still employed in parts of Turkey



between host country and the home country is such that it adds to the illusion of everyone in Europe being wealthy. Both sides are guilty of being unaware of the other's actual living costs. The incomers aren't familiar with the real (lower) monetary cost of things here or of the actual wages to be had and the locals think

a scale of measurement based on one factor only.

A brief scan of television advertising by the tourism agencies of a number of countries shows a large representation from those 'poorer' countries. As is to be expected, only the positive side is promoted, the advertisers seeking to trick potential travellers into seeing only what the advertisers want them to see and often carefully protecting them from seeing the 'real' country when they arrive by arranging suitable tours and escorted visits which skirt the worst areas, i.e. the areas where the majority of the population have to live and work.

'Incredible India' portrayed as rich in culture, diversity, history; 'Malaysia, Truly Asia' steeped in ancient culture with a rich variety of wildlife and welcoming nationals to serve all your needs; 'Jordan'- history, architecture, wild, exciting landscapes and outdoor activity; 'The Maldives' destination for outstanding hospitality, crystal clear sea and mouth-watering cuisine. No mention or sight of the teeming millions living in abject poverty in huge slums with no access to clean water; or of undemocratic repressive regimes, or of sensitive environments being degraded to build first-world standard accommodation and golf courses, or of human rights abuses. Just bring us your money and let the ever-increasing divide grow some more.

Who's to blame? The 'rich' working class of the West? No, they're guilty of having been duped by the system they live under to believe that they have a good life, even while they're complaining about working too many hours, worrying what will happen to their pension, trying to live up to the expectations thrust on them by the capitalist media. The poorer working classes of the countries now being subjected to tourism can hardly be blamed either for trying to improve their lives and living conditions. Why shouldn't they have a piece of the pie?

Both sections of the working class are to be blamed for one thing though and that is for not recognising that they aren't on different sides, they are one and the same. They all need employment, a job or a handout on a regular basis. Without this they are finished. No holiday. No home. No food. No clothes. No nothing. They are to be blamed for not recognising it is the capitalist system itself that is to blame, that causes the divide between rich and poor, of whatever level, that actively works to set one section of the working class against another, to prevent them from working together against the system. How else could such a pernicious system prevail? When the working class of the world eventually understand this we'll be well on our way to achieving our goal. ■

Janet Surman

Here's to Success!

Do you think everyone has an equal chance of success in life?

That whatever family circumstances you were born into make little or no difference to the prospect of your getting on in the world? If so, think again. Danny Dorling, a Professor of Human Geography, was interviewed in the *Guardian* of 8 February. Where you are born, he claims, is the main thing that determines your status, health and wealth in later life. And by the end of your first two decades, your future is mostly decided.

'By 18 or 20 your life is largely mapped out for you. You'll either have interesting jobs where you use your mind your whole life, or your life will be working in a servile occupation.'

In addition, inequality in Britain has increased: in 2000, the wealthiest 1 percent owned 23 percent of the wealth, compared to 18 percent in 1990.

This is all very well, and certainly Dorling's website at <http://www.worldmapper.org> is worth a look. But Socialists have news for the good professor: what determines your standard of living, your control over your life, etc. is which of the two main classes you belong to. The overwhelming majority of

people are members of the working class: selling their mental or physical abilities for a wage or salary (or else depending on another family member who does so). A small minority are members of the capitalist class: they own enough property, whether in the form of land or shares, so that they do not need to work for a living. The contrast between interesting jobs and servile occupations is a division within the working class. The capitalists, as millionaires and billionaires, do not have to get a job - though they often have some cushy number with a title such as Managing Director or Chair of the Board, where they make sure that the interests of shareholders in a company are being looked after properly.

These classes are not castes: it's certainly possible for a person to move from one to another. Members of the working class do occasionally become capitalists, largely through a sizeable slice of luck. But in almost all cases, the class you are born into determines whether you will grow up as an exploiter or a wage slave. So, if 'where you are born' determines how your life will pan out, that has to be seen as a matter of class, not of geography.

PB



Cooking the Books (2)

What is capitalism's true course?

Is capitalism inherently anti-human-welfare or is it just bad policies that make it that way?

An article in the *Financial Times* last year (11 October) by Raymond Baker and Jennifer Nordin entitled "How dirty money thwarts capitalism's true course" put the case for the second view. According to them, capitalism's "true course" is to take into account ethical considerations, what Adam Smith called "moral sentiments", when pursuing profits. Unfortunately, they say, these days this is no longer the case (but was it ever?). "Global capitalists" have chosen to put "maximising profits" before "pursuing lawful and just business transactions", with the result that a "dirty money" structure has grown up consisting of "tax havens, secrecy jurisdictions, abusive transfer pricing, dummy companies, anonymous trusts, hidden accounts, solicitation of ill-gotten gains, kickbacks", etc, etc.

They ask themselves: "Why has so much unethical behaviour become business as usual? One explanation is greed, pure and simple. But this does not adequately explain the phenomenon and demeans many in business who believe they are operating in an ethical manner. An overriding commitment to maximising gains, taking priority over principles comes closer."

Not just "comes closer", we'd say, but is the whole explanation. Capitalism runs on the basis of firms seeking to maximise profits which are then accumulated as further capital invested in further profit-making. As Marx put it, "Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!" (Capital, Volume I, chapter 24, section 3). But Becker and Nordin are right that this has nothing to do with personal greed on the part of individual capitalists. It's something that is built-in to the system which those having to take decisions about economic matters have to abide by or risk the business they own or manage going under. Which is why the authors' vision of a "free market system with a sense of justice and fair play" is no more than a pipedream.

A more realistic assessment of

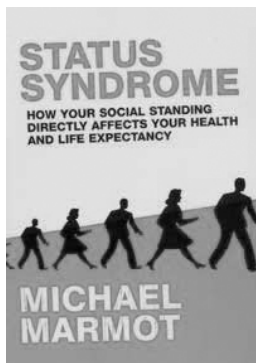
capitalism was given by Robert Newman in an article in the *Guardian* (2 February):

"Capitalism is not sustainable by its very nature. It is predicated on infinitely expanding markets, faster consumption and bigger production in a finite planet. And yet this ideological model remains the central organising principle of our lives, and as long as it continues to be so it will automatically undo (with its invisible hand) every single green initiative anybody cares to come up with. Much discussion of energy, with never a word about power, leads to the fallacy of a low-impact, green capitalism somehow put at the service of environmentalism. In reality, power concentrates around wealth. Private ownership of trade and industry means that the decisive political force in the world is private power. The corporation will outflank every puny law and regulation that seeks to constrain its profitability."

This is well said. A green capitalism is just as much a pipedream as an ethical capitalism or, as we have been saying for ages, a capitalism reformed to benefit the workers. The only possible capitalism is the one we've got: a profit-maximising one.

Get Rich, Get Well

Michael Marmot: Status Syndrome.
Bloomsbury £7.99



Sir Michael Marmot is Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College, London. The author is not a socialist - if anything he is something of an establishment figure, a doctor working as an epidemiologist

(that is a medical statistician) - but he is very much concerned with health and how it is affected by the kind of society we live in. And he makes his case with polished logic, humanity, and humour. This is not a dry-as-dust book of statistics, but a critical examination of the relationship of society to health.

The basic premise is that matters of disease and mortality follow a gradient that has been statistically proven to be hierarchical. Those at the top of the hierarchy have less illness and live longer and as we go down the hierarchy illness increases and life gets shorter. No surprise there, One would immediately conclude that this is purely a matter of economics: the rich live better than the poor. But there is more to it than that. For instance in a Whitehall study of English civil servants, at the ages of forty to sixty-four those at the bottom of the hierarchy have four times greater risk of dying than those at the top.

Taking it as read that absolute poverty has very definite effects on health, Marmot puts the question in true socialist style, 'what is poverty?', and quotes Adam Smith's definition that poverty is relative to the standard of what is considered necessary to exist in the society in which you live. The level of what can be considered as poverty is changing all the time and varies from country to country, between rich and poor nations. Therefore the state of health of the absolute poor in say North America may be better than that of the absolute poor in Gambia. But as you go up the ladder health and mortality also vary in direct relationship. In other words those at the top in a rich country will live longer and have less disease than those at the top in a poor country, and this applies to all the gradients in between. Why? Are there other factors than money involved?

Marmot answers this question by identifying the missing factor as that of control. It is the amount of control you have over your life. He illustrates how this can vary by whatever position you occupy on the social ladder. He then shows how this is related to the amount of stress you are under and backs this up with medical expertise from his training as a doctor to show how physiological and neurological stress can affect health. This is especially connected with heart disease, one of the biggest killers of all.

To quote, "The importance of money for health depends on how much money you had to begin with. If you have little to begin with more money will improve health by meeting basic needs of food, shelter and

sanitation. Above that level, when the problems of privation have been solved how much money you have is not as important as how much you have relative to others in society. It is this relative income that determines what you can do with what you have. We need a richer understanding that poverty and wealth are not only about money."

Marmot raises all the objections that could be raised to his arguments and knocks them down one by one. On the genes versus environment battle he demonstrates how environment can shape genetic influence, and he is particularly scathing on the pro-genetic argument that the rich are where they are because they are genetically programmed to be successful, and demonstrates conclusively that advantage comes from social background, i.e. that where you come from largely governs where you end up. He punctures the league table myth of school results, and demonstrates that league tables are a very accurate indicator of where the school is situated in society. All of this is backed up with statistical evidence.

Neither does he think that poverty and social hierarchies are inevitable. They can be changed. Well, it seems that he thinks there will always be a hierarchy of some sort, but that the gap can be narrowed. At heart he is a reformer who thinks that the answers come with government action, but then he wouldn't be a sir if he was a socialist, would he? Never mind, this is a cracking book and a very good read, which backs up the socialist case from an impeccable source. Reading this book, you are left in no doubt that capitalism is bad for your health.

CYR

Radical London

"Fagin": Reds on the Green: A Short Tour of Clerkenwell Radicalism. Past Tense Publications, £2.00.

It was water that named Clerkenwell; a village with several wells, one of which, the Clerk's Well, that gave its name to the area. The River Fleet ran through, from its sources on Hampstead Heath to where it enters the River Thames near Blackfriars Bridge.

First mentioned in this brief account of Clerkenwell, is the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, where Wat Tyler and the rebel peasants ransacked the Savoy Palace in the Strand, home of John of Gaunt, then the Fleet Prison, crossed into Clerkenwell and set fire to the Priory of the Order of Saint John. In 1665 refugees from the Plague, and in 1666, from the Great Fire of London, moved northwards from the City to Clerkenwell. By the late 17th century, there had been an influx of craftsmen into the area, including many watchmakers and locksmiths. Clerkenwell

Clerkenwell workhouse in the early 19th century



soon became a slum in which thousands of poverty-stricken workers scraped an existence. Parts of the area were notorious for beggars, casual labourers and prostitutes. In the 1800s, the police rarely went into the part of Clerkenwell known as the Rookeries.

Clerkenwell Green became famous, or maybe infamous, for meetings and demonstrations. In 1838, when the Tolpuddle Martyrs returned from their transportation to Australia after being pardoned, some of them were welcomed by a large demonstration on the Green. Indeed, it was the heart of the radical political scene in Victorian London, and was the central venue for public meetings, demonstrations and clashes between Chartists and the recently formed Metropolitan Police Force. In November 1867, there were two demonstrations to protest against the death sentence on three Irish Fenians in Manchester, who were later hanged at Strangeways Prison. In 1882, a large cache of Fenian arms were discovered at St John Street, nearby.

The pamphlet *Reds on the Green* notes that in 1871, there were meetings supporting the Paris Commune, and for the Commune's duration, a red flag hung from the lamp-post on the Green. In 1884, the Social Democratic Federation held meetings there. By the end of the Victorian era, it was a major centre for regular soap-box speakers, as well as a venue for open-air radical meetings and demonstrations.

The author gives a brief account of a number of radical mavericks, such as Dan Chatterton and the anarchist-communist Guy Aldred, who were born and grew up in Clerkenwell. Mention is made of The House (no. 37 Clerkenwell Green), built in 1738, where William Morris and Eleanor Marx addressed crowds from the balconies of the building, and which, since 1933, has housed the Marx Memorial Library. Mention is also made of a certain V Lenin and his wife, Krupskaya, who used the offices of SDF's Twentieth Century Press to edit the paper *Iskra* in 1902. (It is noted that Lenin established a state-capitalist dictatorship.)

The pamphlet concludes with an Appendix of recommended pubs to visit in Clerkenwell. It is well illustrated and is obtainable from: Past Tense Publications, c/o 56A Info Shop, 56 Crampton Street, London, SE17.

PEN

Dictator revealed

Simon Sebag Montefiore Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar. Orion, £9.99.



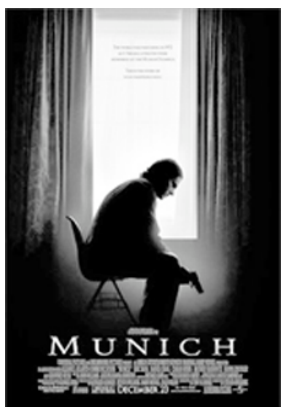
Montefiore's blockbuster is a mighty, novel-like biography of Stalin and the evil apparatchik that attained the economic and political dominance of a ruling class in Russia following on the Bolshevik coup d'état of 1917. But don't look for explanations of the Bolshevik phenomenon or why someone like Lenin, closely familiar with the writings of Marx, Engels and the pioneers of scientific socialism, should lay the foundations for the establishment of an empire at least on a par with the concurrent social evil of Hitler's Nazi Germany.

All things within the wide ambit of the awful world of Joseph Stalin's Russia are

Munich (2005)

Directed by Steven Spielberg

Written by Tony Kushner and Eric Roth
Based on *Vengeance: The True Story of an Israeli Counter-terrorist Team* by George Jonas



Early in the morning of 5 September 1972, Palestinian terrorists stormed the quarters of the Israeli delegation to the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, killing two athletes and taking nine

others hostage. In the botched German police raid that followed, one policeman, five of the eight kidnapers, and all nine hostages were killed. The three surviving kidnapers were released by Germany after the hijacking of a Lufthansa passenger jet the next month. Steven Spielberg's latest pseudo-historical film, *Munich*, tells the story of the Mossad hit squad charged with tracking down and killing the terrorists thought to be responsible for the Munich massacre.

To head the squad, Israeli prime minister Golda Meir personally selects her former bodyguard, Avner. Joining him are Hans, a former antiques dealer who forges the group's documents; Robert, a toymaker who builds their bombs; Carl, the "worrier" who erases evidence from the crime scenes; and Steve, the Jewish-supremacist getaway driver. Though none of the five men have prior training as assassins, they successfully engineer the shootings and bombings of some half dozen of their eleven targets. Much of their intelligence is purchased from Louis, a shadowy French anarchist who helps them in the mistaken belief that they are not government agents. Louis's father was a French Resistance fighter during the war but is now disillusioned with statism. "We paid this price so Vichy scum could be replaced with Gaullist scum, and the Nazis could be replaced by Stalin and America ... We don't work with governments," he says, as if complicity in an assassination is

somehow justified when no state is involved.

After the first few killings, the hit squad begin to have doubts about whether what they are doing is right. The mild-mannered Robert has trouble reconciling his behaviour with his sense of identity as a Jew ("Jews don't do wrong because our enemies do wrong... We're supposed to be righteous.") and later as a human being. Avner frames the dilemma in more practical terms, noting that they have been given no proof that any of their targets had any hand in the Munich incident, and moreover that for every terrorist they kill a new and more fanatical one steps in to take his place. Only Steve remains resolute in his devotion to their task. "Stop your agonizing!" he barks to the others. "It's counterproductive." However, in the end the other squad members are unable to come to terms with their actions. Three of them are killed - one probably by suicide - and Avner eventually returns home to his wife and child with deep emotional scars.

That *Munich* does not endorse any political point of view comes as somewhat of a surprise from Spielberg, an ardent supporter of Israel. The film's purpose is simply to show the effects of politically motivated violence, both on its victims and its perpetrators, and to demonstrate its futility. For this reason, it has come under attack by both the left and the right, the former for humanizing the Israeli assassins, and the latter for making uncomfortably close comparisons between the Palestinian terrorists and the Israeli counter-terrorists. What socialists will find distressing about the film, however, is that it offers only the shallowest of analyses of the socio-economic causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and likewise does not point to any particular solutions. These flaws are especially disappointing considering that screenwriter Tony Kushner describes himself as a "historical materialist socialist". Some characters in the film see the conflict as a religious and racial issue, but the film never uses historical materialism to trace these views to their socio-economic source, nor socialist theory to show that the Israeli and Palestinian assassins, as members of the working class, have more in common with each other than with their respective government leaders. The best we get is some unresolved moral agonizing and the failure of religion and patriotism to assuage the assassins' guilty consciences.

explicable to Montefiore in terms of an ill-conceived notion of Marxism. His research is punctilious to the extent where he can report dialogue between some of the most nefarious characters to (dis)grace European history between capitalism's two world wars. With minute precision he reports the economic lunacies of the forced collectivisation period, the mass murder of literally millions of peasants, the grim destruction of the lives of men, women and children who are made enemies because they are not deemed to be friends; here and there is the profanity of humour within this coterie of evil men with power over life and death who themselves are beholden to a master with power over their life and death. And all this is put down by Montefiore as a consequence of a contamination by 'Marxism', a claim with as much justification as blaming god for the ravages of a tsunami; a claim unsupported by the pointed absence

of any of Marx's writings from the generous bibliography.

The fact that the author knows nothing about Marxism, while clearly doing no service to that subject, perhaps rescues the narrative from a taxing analysis that might have impeded this grim, gossipy biography of men and women striving for power with the tenacity of private entrepreneurial billionaires because power in state capitalism, like money in 'western' capitalism, is truly a universal medium of exchange.

Stalin is an easy read, perhaps a little tedious in its replication and its 'facts' coloured often in that they are the post-Stalin 'justifications' by Stalin's surviving accomplices or relatives of both friends and foes still extant. In summary, Montefiore is an good writer, a good storyteller and a lousy historian.

RM

letters continued

We don't understand the logic of your position: why vote for something you know is pointless? We suspect, though, that you have a "vanguardist" approach and were just opportunistically using the No campaign to attract a following and that by "socialism" you mean some sort of national state capitalism - Editors.

Right about Venezuela

Dear Editors

I read your November issue about Venezuelan president Chavez. I think the left is wrong to support Chavez. He and his supporters want to keep capitalism but reform it so that the part played by state is increased. Their ultimate goal may be establishing a Cuban-style state capitalism in Venezuela accompanied of course by political dictatorship.

I think socialists should expose this reformist bourgeois leader and his supporters and call for working class power in Venezuela. A multi-party socialist state in which the working class rules over the society and expropriates capitalists and petty bourgeoisie and establishes common ownership of means of production and distribution of wealth is the only revolutionary answer to all the poverty, inequality and political dictatorship that capitalism causes at the present time in all countries of the world.

I also condemn those members of the murderous capitalist ruling class of the United States that plan for terror on Chavez.

Down with capitalism! Freedom, equality, worker power!

SIAMAK HAGHIGHAT (by email)

We generally agree except that we wouldn't talk about a state or the working class existing in socialism - Editors.

Given this nebulous treatment, there is the danger that viewers will be led to conclude there is no solution to conflicts such as those in the Middle East. But perhaps at least some will be stimulated into thinking about the real source of political violence, whom it benefits, and how to stop it once and for all.

TRISTAN MILLER

WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
- Can't make it to a meeting?
- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

Join the forum via
www.worldsocialism.org



Middle-East Diary

One of the most recent and rather curious examples to appear on the nationalisation scene, is the Israeli General Zionist (Conservative) Party. They want to nationalise the various Israeli water-schemes, the Health Service and the Labour Exchanges.

Strangely enough the Mapai (Labour) Party, who have been in power since 1948 are bitterly opposed. Through their domination of the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut (roughly analogous to the T.U.C. but also owning and controlling the major part of Israel's industry) the Mapai control most of Israel's economy and are extremely loath to give up their political plums!

The General Zionists, on the other hand, want nationalisation measures to break the Mapai Party's hold on the state machine, all of which we can well understand, sectional struggles amongst the Capitalist class being a regular feature of Capitalism. The tragedy is that Israel workers take sides in this struggle between these parties (both of whom are only interested in perpetuating Capitalism), instead of organising for Socialism.

Two Classes in Israeli Society

In March of last year the *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review* (25.3.55) informed its readers that

"Israel has become divided into two nations . . . an upper crust and a lower layer. The privileged crust is composed of a variety of substantial and mixed elements who enjoy a privileged position in the country. They are made up by the plutocracy of some three hundred families, by the Government 'aristocracy' which

includes a wide range of officialdom, the Histadrutocracy with its manifold operations, the business pressure groups entrenched in the upper reaches of the General Zionists, the old Kibbutzim, such workers' organisations as the Dan and Egged Bus Co-operatives, the upper reaches of such institutions, as the Jewish Agency and of the main political parties-Mapai, the General Zionists. . . ."

"The four per cent.: These are the people in the swim. They can get things-flats, cars, trips abroad, the comforts and conveniences of life, or the profits of business, or the positions of power, according to the category to which they belong. . . ."

"Newcomers since 1948 comprise 60 percent of the population and occupy one percent of all Government posts and virtually none in the high grades."

The article goes on to point out that the personal consumption budgets of the above mentioned 300 families is "around £50,000 per year per family at a time when the income of the highest official is less than a tenth of this amount".

All of which was pointed out by the Socialist Party of Great Britain years ago and only goes to prove our contention, that national struggles-whether of the Zionist (Jewish Home) category or otherwise, are not in the interest of the working-class.

From an article by Jon Keys, *Socialist Standard*, March 1956

Meetings

Manchester One-Day School

Housing - Health - Poverty

Speakers: **Mike Foster** (Birmingham)
Ric Best (Lancaster)

Saturday, **25th March**, 1-5pm
Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, next to Central Library

Clapham

Saturday, **18th March**,
11am to 5pm

BOOK AND MUSIC TAPE SALE

Socialist Party Head Office,
52 Clapham High St, SW4
(nearest tube: Clapham North).



Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



The Whip Who Cracked

It can't all be fun, being a Blair Babe. When Labour came to power in 1997 quite a few of those female MPs were spoken of as future Prime Ministers. With nice, expectant smiles they clustered around their leader, still aglow from his promise that "A new dawn has broken, has it not?" But since those intoxicated days a cruel reality has taken over as one Babe after another has slid down the greasy pole.

Ann Taylor was sacked from the job as Chief Whip, apparently because of her inept manner of telling Blair what to do and say - which would have been some way beyond the job of simply offering him advice. Estelle Morris dismissed herself from the Department of Education because it was all too much for her; she worried so cripplingly about decisions that in the end she disabled herself from taking any - apart from her resignation, that is. Beverley Hughes had to go from the Home Office after denying that she knew about fraudulent asylum applications from Romania and Bulgaria when there was conclusive evidence, which eventually washed her away, that she did know. Ruth Kelly's hold on the job of Education Secretary looks increasingly fragile; apart from anything else, the fate of the latest clutch of changes in education looks more uncertain by the day.

And then there is the present Chief Whip, Hilary Armstrong, who has always been one of the more vociferous and combative Blair Babes, but who upset Blair when she lost a crucial House of Commons vote through her own misguided efforts. It happened when the Commons defeated the government on amendments to the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill. Armstrong miscounted the votes in favour of the unamended Bill and told Blair that it was safe for him to go home; in the event, with the aid of rebellious Labour MPs, the government lost - by just the one vote.

Aristocrat

Armstrong was a leading light in the 1997 Blair Babes, apparently looking forward to a bright future. It is different now, after eight years of New Labour's version of controlling British capitalism. "A disaster where women are concerned," was how one of her colleagues described her. "She has no respect in the parliamentary party...She is seen as someone who crawls to Downing Street and regards the parliamentary party with contempt," was the opinion of one peeved MP. Such ratings probably don't register with her; she is, after all, a kind of Labour Party aristocrat, inheriting her seat - Durham North West - from her father, who was also a Chief Whip in a Harold Wilson Government in the days before bouncy media types had titillated Labour's women with a saucy brand name like Blair Babes. She has said that her father's diaries informed her that a Whip leads a hard life, although her rise to the Cabinet was rather easier than it usually is for others; she was selected as the candidate for Durham North West at her first attempt and was appointed as Chief Whip after only a brief spell as a junior minister for local government in John Prescott's cumbersome monster of a department covering Environment, Transport and the Regions. There are comforts in the patronage traditionally associated with an aristocracy and clearly Armstrong has taken advantage of them.

The office of the Whips came into its own with the polarisation of the parties consequent on the 1832 Reform Act. Before then parliamentary business had been the concern of the Speaker; the Whips, using a social network centred on exclusive London clubs like Brooks and Whites, were supposed to "give advice" to MPs on how they might think about voting. The pairing system, now an important part of the Whip's work (as Armstrong, after her disastrous miscounting, must now know) was largely left for the MPs to arrange themselves. After the Act the Whips took on these duties, as well as developing links between MPs and the government. This was, they said, a matter of "continuity" - a word ominous rather

than reassuring.

Heath

The late Ted Heath, who was Chief Whip in the Conservative governments between 1955 and 1959, described the work as "above all, to hold the parliamentary party together" and in more detail: "I was determined to get away from the generally held view... that the Whips were a gang of ignorant bullies, forcing Members of Parliament to vote in certain ways, all too often against their wishes." There are, of course, other responsibilities. Heath recalled one, not untypical, early morning incident when he telephoned an absent MP whose vote was needed, to be told by the MP's sleepy wife that he was, as usual, at the Commons. Such chance events, said Heath, helped the Whips keep an eye on Members with long-term matrimonial problems and so avoid a scandal. He did not also say that such wayward MPs might be effectively reminded of their obligations to vote as the party wished by a little prudent blackmail.

In his memoirs *The Course of My Life*, Heath gives some indication of what is implied by the phrase "to hold the parliamentary party together". His time as Chief Whip coincided with the Suez invasion; he had serious reservations about this, in particular about the secret agreement between Britain, France and Israel which encouraged Israel to attack Egypt and so provide a spurious justification for the Anglo-French attack. But when a Tory MP who had abstained in the Commons vote on the war asked him outright if there had been such a secret plot, Heath "looked (him) straight in the eyes and said nothing. He understood completely". But it seems that such adaptability of principles on Heath's part was only achieved at some cost. Before he joined the Whip's office Heath was known as a gregarious, convivial Member. The



Estelle Morris

years devoted to "holding the party together" - suppressing his own responses to events in order to stifle potential rebellion and to manage the government vote - had left its mark on him. He was on course to become Prime Minister but he had become an unbending, obsessive man with an apparent mission in life to be as rude and contemptuous to as many of the people he called his colleagues, as possible. Iain Macleod, who was one of his bitterest enemies in the Tory party, damned him as "totally unable to make a speech that anybody can listen to... no feeling for words at all, no feeling for the rhythm of language".

Armstrong

Heath would have been appalled to the point of apoplexy at the confusion which led to Hilary Armstrong losing the vote on the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill, and in such humiliating circumstances. Of course she has had what might be called her successes, which means she has wangled, or cajoled, or bullied, MPs into voting against their first inclinations and to support the government on issues like the attack on Iraq, with its loss of tens of thousands of lives. Such achievements in the cause of British capitalism have not softened the antagonism towards her. When she is full cry in the Commons she makes her points - if that is what she is doing - in a voice which has earned her the nickname of Squawker. When Michael Howard, then Tory leader, taunted



Hilary Armstrong

Blair by reading extracts from Stephen Pollard's highly embarrassing biography of David Blunkett, Armstrong's contribution to the debate was to throw the book across the despatch box into the groin of a Tory front bench (who reacted as if he had been shot there. Well, this was the House of Commons and not a school playground).

Armstrong's blunder on this Bill was only one of a series of recent defeats for the government which, with other events such as the result of the by-election on Dunfermline and West Fife, seem to have persuaded many Labour MPs, up to now myopically loyal, that their best hope of survival at the next election lies in timely rebellion. In the face of this cynicism Armstrong has a desperate struggle to hold the parliamentary party together - a struggle in which she will employ as much cynicism as have the rebels. Of all the dirty jobs in politics that of the Chief Whip is among the dirtiest, most contaminating. And that goes for much of what capitalism demands, day in and day out, to hold it together. ■

IVAN



Beverley Hughes



Ruth Kelly



Ann Taylor



Voice from the Back

Still Accumulating

In last month's column we reported on how in India capitalism was repeating the process that Karl Marx had analysed in Capital, under the heading of the primitive accumulation of capital; now an identical procedure is being carried out in China. "Several people have been injured in the latest violent clash between villagers and armed police in southern China. ...China reported 74,000 demonstrations involving more than a 100 people in 2004." (*Times*, 16 January) These demonstrations are by farmers protesting at the seizure by the government of land that they have tilled for generations. The seizures are extremely violent as shown by the death of three protesters gunned down by the police in the previous month.

The Helheim Glacier, southeast Greenland, now one of the fastest moving glaciers in the world. Total ice loss from the ice sheet increased from 95 cubic kilometers in 1996 to 220 cubic kilometers in 2005 (source: NASA).



A Disastrous System

Under the headline "World has only 20 years to stop climate disaster", the *Times* (31 January) reported on the document Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change. This reported on the conference hosted by the Met Office in Exeter last year. The release of carbon dioxide is causing the polar caps to melt and many areas face disastrous flooding. As every government in the world represents the interests of the capitalist class, who in their mad drive for profits are polluting the atmosphere, the future looks disastrous unless we can get rid of capitalism.

Same Old Story

Under the headline "People die of famine in nation that exports food" the *Times* (18

January) expresses astonishment over events in Kenya. "The British aid agency Merlin found that 27 per cent of children around the town were malnourished - nearly twice the 15 per cent emergency level." Their astonishment is because: "Kenya is a food exporter. Grain silos are still full from last year's harvest." Their misunderstanding is because they think malnourishment is caused by drought rather than capitalism, after all in the 19th century during the Irish potato famine Ireland was exporting food. It's the same all over the world throughout history, if you have money you eat, if you're poor you starve. That is how capitalism works.

Some Mean Cities

Capitalism is a dangerous society. How dangerous often depends on what part of the world in which you live. More important than that though is the class to which you belong. According to recent figures if you are a man and live in the Gaza Strip your life expectancy is 70.5 years. If you live in some other areas of the war-torn Middle-East it is even lower, but even more hazardous is trying to survive in the working class area of Calton in Glasgow. "In Iraq, life expectancy is 67. Minutes from Glasgow city centre, it's 54." (*Guardian*, 21 January). The message seems clear for all potential parents - don't have your child reared in a war zone, but if you can't manage that, at least avoid a working class area in Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham or Newcastle. Capitalism is a killer society, no matter where you live.

The Uncaring Society

We live in a harsh, brutal society; but even by its standards the following report is a shocker. "A postal worker rode in a subway train around New York for six hours before a commuter noticed he was dead" (*Times*, 25 January). The 64-year-old Vietnam veteran had joined the subway after finishing work at 1am and his train had covered the 15-mile circuit six times before he was discovered. In the rat race that is capitalism human beings become callous towards others, but probably a

contributing factor to this piece of inhumanity was the knowledge that eye contact in the New York subway can prove to be dangerous at certain times.

Education Is A Commodity

Everything that is produced in capitalism takes the form of a commodity even education. "A detailed look at half a million pupils will show that bright children from the poorest families are often fated to perform below their potential. Success at primary school can soon become irrelevant as children repeatedly fail to get places at the country's top schools, the study by the Centre for Market and Public Organisation will say." (*Observer*, 5 February) Everything that is produced - housing, clothing and food - is distributed according to your wealth. Why should education be any different in a buying and selling society?

All Right For Some

Every day we read in the newspapers about poverty, world hunger and crime, but it is not all doom and gloom inside capitalism. Take the case of billionaire Larry Ellison, reputed to own about \$17 billion, his lawyer reported to a San Francisco court that Ellison owned a \$194 million yacht. "But most intriguing is the money his accountant set aside for what are described as "lifestyle" expenses: \$55,000 a day." (*Times*, 7 February) \$55,000 a day? Yes \$55,000 a day. We definitely need a revolution!

Larry Ellison's \$194 million yacht Oracle



Free Lunch

by Rigg



socialist standard

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Journal of The Socialist Party - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Futures Trading



**Parecon versus Socialism:
Two post-capitalist visions
slug it out.**



RFID - the new
virus alert?
page 4



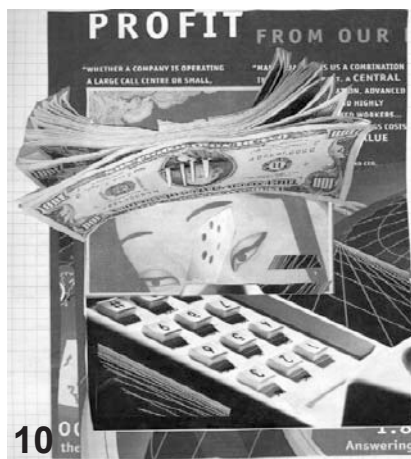
It was a hundred
years ago today
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'pitifully eager
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socialist standard

website: www.worldsocialism.org

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- 15 More about a socialist scenario**
We add to the socialist scenario presented last month in response to Foresight's *Intelligent Infrastructure Futures*.

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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 1st April** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.
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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial

Elections - what for?

We live in a world of inequality where wealth is the real source of power, profits come first and billions are poor through no fault of their own.

All communities are blighted by inequality and deprivation.

In the local elections in 4 May, as in all elections, you have a choice.

You can vote for candidates who would work within this system and help keep it going. Or you can use your vote to overturn it and end these blights once and for all.

Real power today does not lie in elected bodies but in the hands of those who own the world's wealth. Labour, Tories, Liberals and the others in this election are just arguing over how to use the scraps thrown from the billionaire's table. A system based on private property has to be run in the interests of its owners. Their profits have to come first.

So long as inequality of wealth and power exist elections such as these are just about who is to run this system. The only rational choice is to reject the compromisers and reformists and use every resource available to end it.

You don't need to vote for any particular party to get rubbish collected, schools built or amenities provided. Communities don't need leaders to get those things for themselves. You know what you need better than any careerist councillor ever could and, if there was real democracy, could easily arrange this. Under the present system, though, you only get them, so long as those who own the world make the resources available. But they always give

priority to making more profits, so these things are always under-resourced and never done properly.

You can instead send a clear signal to other people like yourselves upon whose hard work this system is built that you want to put an end to it, by refusing to vote for any of the capitalist parties and instead writing "World Socialism" across the ballot paper.

When enough of us join together determined to end inequality and deprivation we can transform elections into a means of doing away with a society of minority rule in favour of real democracy and equality.

Our common efforts could feed, clothe and house every man woman and child on Earth without exception but we are held back because the owners of the world demand their cut before they'll let us use the world's resources. The iron laws of No Profit, No Production and No Profit, No Employment are a cage for us.

If you agree with the idea of a society of common and democratic ownership where no-one is left behind and where things are produced because they are needed, and not to make profits for some capitalist corporation or to enrich some bloated millionaire, and are prepared to join with us to achieve this, then vote for World Socialism.

The Socialist Party is standing candidates in Lambeth and Kingston in the London borough elections. For details and offers of help phone 0207 622 3811 or email spgb@worldsocialism.org



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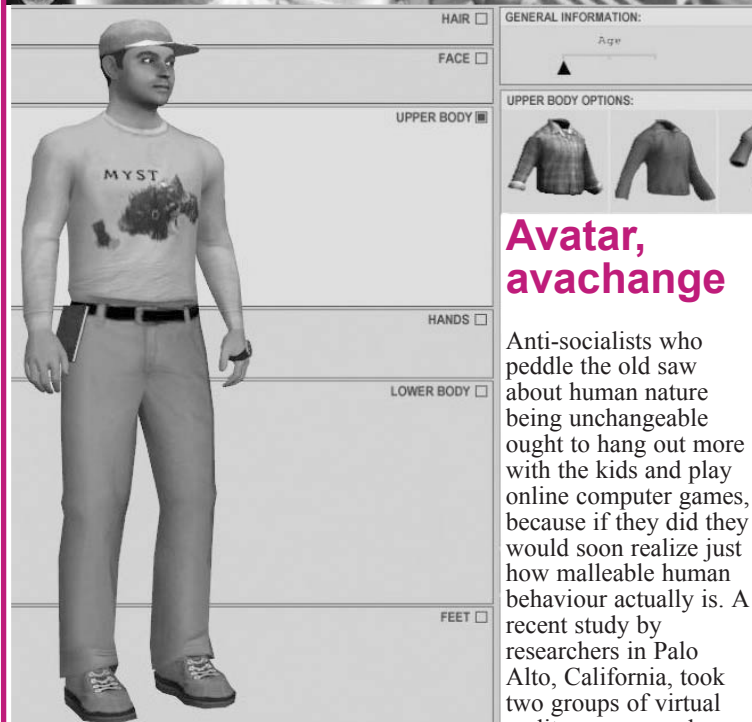
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Avatar, avachange

Anti-socialists who peddle the old saw about human nature being unchangeable ought to hang out more with the kids and play online computer games, because if they did they would soon realize just how malleable human behaviour actually is. A recent study by researchers in Palo Alto, California, took two groups of virtual reality gamers and

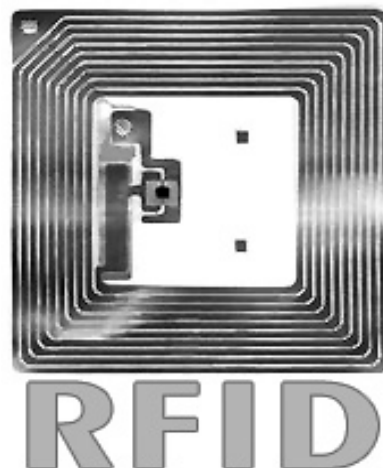
assigned them online cartoon representations, or avatars, which were deliberately given distinct physical characteristics, shorter or taller in the first group, and uglier or prettier in the second. Then they studied the behaviour of the gamers. (*New Scientist*, Feb 25, p.30). Those whose avatars were taller displayed consistently more assertive and aggressive behaviour while the shorter players were more acquiescent, and in the second group, the uglier players stood farther apart than the prettier ones. A quick and informal interrogation by Pathfinders of known local players reveals that this sort of behavioural change is common knowledge among gamers and in fact accounts for much of the appeal of virtual reality gaming. If our behaviour is so easily influenced by our perception of ourselves and our virtual surroundings, it is not hard to imagine a sea-change in human behaviour occurring almost overnight if our actual material surroundings were changed, say by the abolition of private ownership. The researchers plan to run the experiment next using age as the defining characteristic. We look forward to gamers, confronted by themselves with wrinkled skin and grey hair, suddenly becoming gurus of wisdom and maturity.

Drugs trial + Pro-Test

The controversy over animal testing has always generated more heat than light, and the temperature has now been turned up several notches on the regulo dial by two unrelated but curious events. One is the unprecedented 'coming out' of pro-test students in Oxford under the name 'Pro-Test', instigated by a young student disgusted with anti-testers' increasingly terrorist tactics against individuals as well as the alleged poor quality of the debate. The other is the catastrophic clinical trial of the drug TGN1412, developed by the German TeGenero biotechnology company, that left six UK volunteers in intensive care, with two of them in critical condition as this goes to press (*FT.com*, March 16). Early reports are suggesting that the paperwork for the trial was entirely in order and that the drug had already been extensively tested on rabbits and monkeys with no discernible adverse effects, so that it was deemed entirely safe to proceed with clinical trials in humans. What is especially interesting about this calamity is that both sides of the animal testing debate will immediately seize on it as proof of their position: the anti-testers will parade this disaster as evidence that animal testing is unable to prevent harmful drugs like Thalidomide and Seroxat, now TGN1412, from reaching humans, while pro-testers will be entirely justified in asking how many more potentially lethal drugs would have been tried on humans if animal testing had been banned outright. As with many things in science, both sides have a point, and there are no simple answers. Even in socialism, where there would be little likelihood of animal testing for non-medical purposes, eg. cosmetics (such research today account for around three quarters of testing), this debate would most probably run and run.

RFID, RDFI, DRIF, FRIED...

News that researchers have managed to infect state of the art RFID tags with a virus (*BBC Online*, March 15) raises a number of disturbing issues for the security of this new technology, as well as a highly interesting question for socialist revolutionaries in the wired world of the 21st century. These electronic Radio Frequency ID tags, which give every inanimate object the ability to identify itself electronically, can now be printed on cans of beans, and even sprayed on advertising posters, so that in the supermarkets of the near future the checkout till, barcode reader and human operator will disappear and your goods will be automatically identified in the trolley, and your bank account debited, as you push your wonky-wheeled chariot through the doors and into the carpark. Such 'smart-tagging' of products, posters, pets and even people carries huge benefits from a capitalist point of view, and not a few benefits from a future socialist society's point of view too (see *Socialist Standard*, Jan 2005), but none of this takes into account what happens when a virus introduces Factor X - the RF Identity Crisis. When all forms of hard cash have disappeared, and the circulation of money in the economy is replaced by the circulation of binary digits round a computer network, the money economy will have reached its zenith of efficiency, and its nadir of vulnerability. One smart hacker could in theory do by stealth what all the revolutionaries of history have failed to do by force - abolish price tags, wipe out bank accounts, mortgages, debts, profits, rents and fees, thus effectively 'rebooting' society and resetting all values at zero. The question, for socialists, is whether they could ever condone, or advocate, such a draconian step, given the chaos which would quite likely ensue. Given the organized chaos of a society which at present lets most of its members suffer appalling deprivation within a sea of riches, the answer is surely not straightforward.



More on viruses

AOL, the American internet giant, have recently been hit by a double whammy. First, according to informed sources close to Pathfinders, their endorsed anti-virus partner Macafee turned out a March upgrade to their anti-virus software which, oh dear, oops, deletes certain vital Windows DLL overlay files, which is the equivalent of removing the spark plugs from your car engine. Then, within days, the Norton group produced their anti-virus upgrade which accidentally removes, yes, you guessed it, your AOL internet software. If anti-virus companies are going to carry on doing more damage to your computer than the viruses they are supposed to catch, surely the obvious question is: why don't they test these upgrades on virtual animals first? Remember, you saw this idea here first.

Lastly, on viruses

In case you missed this: the animals in the jungle are discussing who is the scariest of them all. 'Me', says the lion, and gives out a big roar. The animals shake their heads, unimpressed. 'Me', says the gorilla, and thumps his chest. The animals tap their paws, underwhelmed. Then the parrot lets out a sneeze, and everybody runs for miles.... You know it's serious when the jokes start appearing.

Work within capitalism?

Dear Editors

The article about Fair Trade (*Socialist Standard*, February) was certainly very interesting and the author puts forward a strong case, I haven't got the time to outline counter-arguments to all the points but I can give an overview of what we are calling for. As a development charity we are working to improve people's lives. You may disagree with the present socio-economic system but there is no current alternative, therefore, we think it is better to try and work within this system rather than just point out the difficulties and decide that nothing can be done. It also doesn't take in to account that not all benefits for developed nations are so overtly determined by economics. For instance, what about the problems caused by mass-migration due to poverty? Surely rich nations have a vested interest in helping poorer nations to try and stem this flow. Our position is quite clear. We want developed nations to stop putting tariffs on imports from developing nations, stop using protectionism that leads to dumping and allow developing nations to protect their fledgling industries. I disagree with the article, as this would make a difference to the lives of some of the poorest. They would be able to sell their produce domestically and eventually be able to export it. To read about our ideas on Fair Trade please follow this link: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/fairtrade/index.htm

I think 2005 was a landmark year in the struggle against poverty. Firstly, there was the agreement to write off debt at the

G8, something that the author can't account for using his/her premises, Gordon Brown also reconfirmed the pledge to raise aid levels to 0.7 percent GDP. Added to this is the fact that due to the Global Call to Action against Poverty Campaign (GCAP) more people all over the world protested to end poverty then has ever been seen before. If we can keep the pressure on in this way we can force our governments to change their actions. Governments aren't just led by economic determinism, they are also led by public pressure. Therefore, while there is still a lot to be done we think that there have already been successes and that we need to keep up the pressure.

IAN SULLIVAN, Supporter Relations, Oxfam

Reply:

We have never denied that campaigning charities like Oxfam can, and do, help a limited number of people. Our case is that they will never solve the problem they have chosen to concentrate on. We note that you confirm that Oxfam does have a reformist approach, as you claim that there is no current alternative to "the present socio-economic system" (capitalism) and so pursue a policy of working within that system to try to reform it. We, on the other hand, think in terms of action to replace capitalism by a system in which begging bowls can be assigned to the museum of antiquities because, with common ownership and production for use, people's basic needs would be able to be met as a matter of course. - Editors.

Feeling Lucky

Dear Editors

My thanks for pointing out what www.worldmapper.org is worth a look (March *Socialist Standard*).

Readers of the *Socialist Standard* may think they know a lot of the answers and even more of the problems, but look worldwide and inequalities are somewhat more stark than between the two social classes you refer to. Are you feeling lucky? Then here's an old thought game. You are having a child and you are concerned that your child might not live to see the end of its first year of life. You can choose when and where you give birth and your class. You have three options:

Your husband is a very rich factory owner living a hundred years ago in England, you have servants, a huge home and gardens (in say 1906). You are a middle class woman in Pakistan living in Islamabad in 2006. You are a working class woman living in Yorkshire in England in 2006. The respective chances of your child dying before their first birthday would be roughly: 1 in 10, 1 in 30 and 1 in 100. You could improve those chances further to 1 in 300 and almost 1 in 1000 by being middle class now in Yorkshire, or being that and moving to Iceland.

What I'm trying to point out is that the importance of class is contingent on both history and geography - and a woman giving birth in the world today cannot choose her history, or geography or class. You claim that "So, if 'where you are born' determines how your life will pan out, that has to be seen as a matter of class, not of geography".

continued on page 18

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Enfield and Haringey branch. Tues. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL. email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

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The Easter Rising - 90 years on

Easter sees the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rebellion against British rule in Ireland. The Irish Cabinet - specifically, the government of the Republic of Ireland - and members of the Dail will watch as the Irish army marches past the General Post Office in Dublin's O'Connell Street where Pearse and Connolly established the rebel HQ in 1916.

After being cancelled for years the Rising Commemoration has been restored by the Ahern government, anxious to maintain its republican credentials against the growing threat of Sinn Féin in the impending General Election. The excuse for originally cancelling the Commemoration was that the army was so overstretched on foreign UN peace-keeping duties that it couldn't stage a march of a couple of hours' duration in Dublin.

The real reason, of course, was that the genuine inheritors of the political lunacy of 1916, the Provisional IRA, were actively engaged in the killing business, intermixed with bank robberies and crimes of violence not only in Northern Ireland

but in the Republic of Ireland as well. Celebrating the killings of those who had laid the foundations of the Irish state was regarded as honourable but the new killings of their latter-day progenitors were not. The fear was that the Provisional IRA might well be the political and military beneficiaries of a dramatic outburst of the patriotic emotion engendered by the establishment's recognition of a Rising that had even less justification than the resuscitation of the IRA in 1970.

It was Dublin that bore the bloody birth pangs of the IRA when about 1,000 men of the Irish Volunteers coalesced with Connolly's 300-member Irish Citizen Army on Easter Monday 1916 to become the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and challenge the might of the British army as

well as units of the British navy in a fight for Irish political independence.

The Commander-in-Chief of the rebel army was a Dublin schoolteacher and poet called Patrick Pearse. At a practical level he appears to have been an inoffensive pedagogue but his writings reveal another side to the man, a side that might well have preoccupied a psychiatrist, for his alter ego was a soldier of destiny with an inclination for blood sacrifice.

In 1916 blood sacrifice was high on the agenda of world capitalism. Competition between opposing national segments of capitalism had spilled over into massive violence as hapless legions of working men contested on the blood-soaked battlefields of Europe in the interests of their masters. Pearse obviously felt the exhilaration of an absent participant; in 1915, when incompetent generals and field marshals were sending millions of men to assured death in northern France he wrote:

"The last 15 months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe. Heroism has come back to the earth... It is good for the world that such things should be done. The old heart of the earth needed



Clockwise, from top: The seven signatories of the Irish Proclamation: Padraig Pearse, James Connolly, Thomas Clarke, Thomas MacDonagh, Sean MacDermott, Joseph Plunkett and Eamonn Ceannt. All of the above men were executed by the British Government for their part in the Easter 1916 Rebellion. Central Dublin; members of the Irish Citizen Army; British troops sheltering behind a barricade; an Irish Volunteers meeting poster

to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields. Such august honour was never offered to God as this."

In *The Story of a Success*, he complains:

"The exhilaration of fighting has gone out of Ireland... when people say that Ireland will be happy when her mills throb and her harbours swarm with shipping they are talking as foolishly as if one were to say of a lost saint, 'That man will be happy again when he has a comfortable income'. I know that Ireland will not be happy again until she recollects... that laughing gesture of a young man that is going into battle or climbing to a gibbet."

Thus, the idiocies of the Commander-in-Chief of the armed wing of Sinn Féin who, in kindness, we can only see as deeply mentally disturbed. But, along with Pearse, in creating what W B Yeats saw as the birth of "a terrible beauty" was James Connolly, one-time member of the Social Democratic Federation, who broke with that organisation a short time before the founding comrades of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and was one of those who combined in establishing a Scottish section of the Socialist Labour Party.

Connolly claimed to be a Marxist and described Marx as the greatest of modern thinkers. In 1912 during the great Dublin

lockout when the Irish Constabulary attacked the strikers, Connolly and James Larkin, the strike leader, had established a workers' defence organisation with the grandiose title of the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) that, in 1916, was to combine with a small section of the Irish volunteers as the IRA, whose political mouthpiece was Sinn Féin.

The Irish dramatist, Sean O'Casey, who was secretary to the ICA, said Connolly forsook the cause of the international proletariat for the insular romanticism of Irish Nationalism. In fact, Connolly's espousal of Irish nationalism could be more properly defined as a betrayal of the worker's trade-union cause as what he brought the impoverished members of the ICA out to fight for on Easter Monday was the right of a fledgling Irish bourgeoisie to establish legislative independence that would afford it trade protection, in the words of Sinn Féin, "...from English and other foreign capitalists".

Ironically, then, the people whose economic interests were to be fought for was the nascent Irish capitalist class; the very people who had locked out the Irish workers in 1912 and called out Crown forces to attack those workers; the very people who had led Larkin and Connolly to

conclude the need for a defensive Irish Citizen Army.

Sinn Féin, in its policy statement of 1907 had made clear the identity of the class it represented though it euphemistically referred to the Irish capitalist class as "home manufacturers and producers":

"If an Irish manufacturer cannot produce an article as cheaply as an English or other foreign capitalist, only because his foreign competitor has larger resources at his disposal, then it is the first duty of the Irish nation to accord protection to that manufacturer."

As an epilogue to the Rising we might recall the words of Patrick Pearse in *The Coming Revolution*:

"We might make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people but bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing."

In the Rising of 90 years ago which the political agents of Irish capitalism are commemorating this Easter, some 50 rebels were killed while more than four times that number of civilians died. It was the latter, innocent and, as it happened, uniformly poor, who were the real blood sacrifice and their deaths presaged even worse to come. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE

How the market doesn't work

that the cogs in this marvellous mystery self-regulating machine are human beings who must be ground out to make it run smoothly, such a picture of the market system is quite, quite wrong.

A clear example stands before us from the recent news. Over the past year, television and radio has been reporting how people in well-paid City jobs have been leaving to become plumbers. The shortage of those skilled tradespeople has meant, according to market forces, that the price of their labour has risen. Accordingly, the price of a plumber's labour or labour power (depending on whether they are self-employed or not) has risen

to attract more people into the trade to fill up the gap between supply and demand. All of this sounds exactly like the market functioning perfectly.

The problem is that, at the end of January, BBC radio reported that the market for plumbing skills has become glutted - so many people were attracted into the trade that now there are more plumbers than there is work available. This can happen because, far from being the perfect mechanism for conveying information, the market can only convey information at the speed of trade. Prices will not be lowered until the plumbers start entering the market and begin lowering their prices to tout for trade against stiff competition. New entrants to the market will not be able to see that supply has been fulfilled until after the prices start to fall. People just entering training - having heard the word on the street - will not know until they are finished that the bottom has fallen out of the market, and that the arrival of them and their class mates has caused this.

However, even if some sort of mechanism was applied to coordinate between different branches of production, the problems of capitalism would still occur. Otherwise the state capitalism in the former Soviet bloc would have never collapsed and its system would have been seen to be more sturdy than the Western variety. Even with the greatest planning in the world, accidents happen, things change and perfect coordination is rendered impossible. The problem lies much deeper than that, though, in the very nature of capitalism itself.

If the plumbers could simply jump from the plumbing market to a different trade without any difficulty, there would be no problem - they would still be able to acquire the necessary use values with which to live. The problem is, however, that these workers have invested money that they need to recover - both in terms of paying for training and of earnings and promotions they would have gained had they stayed in their old careers. They have invested money in order to enter into the market, and in many cases may well have borrowed as well as using up their savings. In order to ensure they do not make a loss (which will risk their homes and families) they need to ensure that they get that money back - they have to return their initial investment back into its original form as money.

Many plumbers will be unable to do this, and will find themselves driven out of business, based on nothing but the mistiming of their investments and their inability to lay hands on cash. It will not necessarily reflect on their plumbing skills, their personality or anything about them, but simply the blind workings of the market. In order to obtain use values - the things they

When you're out on the stump discussing capitalism - face-to-face or on-line - you can guarantee some defender of the system that has left a third of the world population without clean water, nearly a sixth without enough food, and wrought

megadeaths upon megadeaths from wars within the last hundred years, will try and point out how the market is the most efficient system for allocating resources. A self-correcting mechanism without which we would all descend to barbarism and all advanced industry and technology would utterly cease to be. Leaving aside

Plumbers of the World - Unite!

(you have nothing to chain but your loos)

“Over the past year, television and radio has been reporting how people in well-paid City jobs have been leaving to become plumbers.”



We don't say 'leak' these days, Julian, we call it 'aggressive liquidity of assets'.

City traders adopting an honest occupation

need with which to live - they must secure exchange value. To stay in business, though, they must use some of the money - exchange value - they earn to pay debts or to ensure they are not out of pocket.

This process, or turning useful things back into exchange value, distinct from the particular usefulness of any given thing, is the essence of capitalism.

Anything that interrupts this process puts a spanner in the works of that shiny self-regulating machine - and miscoordination based on poor information is just one such (common) spanner. Whilst our example here is small affecting only a few thousand people at most, obviously, a major capitalist concern could lose billions of pounds and wreak havoc on millions of lives.

Some sharp-eyed pro-capitalists - skilled in misdirecting arguments from points on which they are losing - may choose to suggest that we have here accepted an important point of theirs. These people, they will claim, are willing to do the dirty work - the plumbing - solely because the price is right and they have been lured into the trade. Such nimble minds would actually find themselves too fast for their own feet. Many of the bored office workers (interviewed by journalists, another species of bored office worker) expressed their pleasure that they would find the work interesting and fulfilling, and that it was because the work paid a decent wage now that they were able to enter that trade.

So, in fact, it proves precisely our point once more - the requirements of exchange value hold back the natural co-operation and ability and desire to work of human beings, rather than enabling it. Socialism would be as prone to nature and accident as any system and so could miscalculate and produce too much of something. But as it would not be hamstrung by turning things into exchange values as capitalism is, it could just write off any waste as a misfortune to try and be avoided, rather than one to be exacerbated and spread by sackings and bankruptcies.

People's skills could be used when required and people would not find themselves dumped on the rubbish heap and denied access to their necessities of life just because they had worked hard and finished the job or because less of that type of work were no longer required. We would be able to enter into an age where communication conveyed at the speed of light could be used immediately, without having to be grafted onto the old operating system of society - like trying to read the internet on a pocket calculator. ■

PIK SMEET



Cooking the Books (1)

Living in an asset

At the beginning of March the Nationwide Building Society reported a fall in its house price index of 0.2 percent. They attribute

this to a mere blip in the market. Other commentators are not so sure; they see it as a sign that the predicted end of the present house price boom is nigh.

Actually, it is not really a boom in the price of houses. Houses are a product of labour and so have a value of their own but, once built, they are subject, through use, to depreciation and will only maintain their value if money is spent on their maintenance. With inflation, the price of a properly maintained house will tend to rise anyway, though, with gains in productivity in the building industry, the cost of building a house will fall.

What is booming is not the price of the house as a building but the price of the land on which it stands. As land is not the product of labour it has no value, just a price which Marx (in Capital, Volume I, chapter 3, section 1) called an "imaginary price-form" as it wasn't an expression of value. The price of land, however, is not entirely irrational but is calculated by "capitalising" the income it can be expected to bring. So, if a plot of land brings in an annual income (normally as rent) of £5000, it can be regarded as a capital-value bringing in an income of this amount and, if the rate of interest is 5 percent, as worth £100,000.

This in fact is how surveyors and property speculators calculate the monetary

value of a property, though over a longer period than a year. Because of the permanent, if at the moment fairly slow, inflation, "income" can include the expected rise in price by the end of the chosen period. Also, if the chosen rate of interest is different, then so will the monetary value. For instance, if, in the example above, the rate had been 4 percent the monetary value would be £125,000. If the rate had been 6 percent it would be £83,333.

Low interest rates will tend to encourage a rise in the actual selling price of land anyway because they will tend to increase the demand for it. This is especially the case with the land on which houses stand, in that the house with its land is generally bought by taking out a loan (a mortgage) and the lower the rate of interest charged on it the more people that can afford to enter the market.

Most people buy a house to be their home for the foreseeable future, but a significant number now buy a house as a financial asset which they hope will increase in price, so enabling them to realise a capital gain. This has introduced the same sort of speculative element into the housing market as exists on the stock exchange, with people gambling on an increase in what their asset is worth.

It is this that has led one school of capitalism-watchers to argue that not only does this make a housing bubble possible, but that a bubble actually exists at present and which will sooner or later burst, leading house-and-land prices to fall.

If this happens, then, in a period of relatively low inflation as at present, this price fall wouldn't be

absorbed by house-and-land prices not rising as fast as inflation but by them actually falling. There would be widespread negative equity and repossessions. And it wouldn't be just those who bought a house as a speculative investment who would get their fingers burnt. Those who bought a house merely as a place to live in would suffer too.

Capitalism is exposed as an irrational and anti-human system when a basic human need such as shelter can become the subject of stock-exchange-like speculation with all the consequences that can result when a speculative bubble bursts.



Parecon or socialism?

There are few political debates currently occurring of any real significance to the majority of the world's population. The debate concerning the nature of a post-capitalist economy ranks as the most important on the revolutionary agenda. Thus, we present recent correspondence between ourselves and the author of the book Parecon: Life After Capitalism

The review of Parecon: Life After Capitalism, appearing in February Socialist Standard, was troubling. The review says the economic system proposed in the book called participatory economics, or parecon for short, permits profits, just not excessive profits. But in parecon there are no owners. In fact there are no classes. More, no one earns income based on ownership of any kind. There are, therefore, no profits - none.

Yes, society produces a social product. Yes, some plants produce a total value of output greater, and in some cases even much greater, than the total value of their inputs, including their labor. But, no, this does not enrich anyone associated with those plants relative to the incomes, say, of people working at plants that are far less productive. Remuneration is uncorrelated to value of output save that people must do socially valuable labor to be remunerated for labor at all. What the reviewer says about profit affecting wages, etc., in parecon, is simply about some other system...unless the reviewer is saying, if total output for a parecon is lower, average income is lower, which is, of course, a truism, having zero to do with profits, which don't exist in a parecon.

The reviewer says, incredibly, that getting rid of private ownership of

production, markets, top down decision making, the corporate division of labor, and remuneration for property and power, the core economic institutions of capitalism, and replacing them with self managing workers and consumers councils, balanced job complexes, remuneration for duration, intensity, and onerousness of labor, and participatory planning, the core economic institutions of parecon - is correcting political dimensions, but not economics. I doubt the reviewer read the book. It is confined to addressing economic dimensions, not the polity.

I suspect that this reviewer thinks that because in parecon there are income, wages, and valuations - prices - it must be capitalism. This marks a major confusion. A letter I received from the host periodical signed off, "Yours for a moneyless, wageless world of common ownership." This too, is troubling.

In this world you desire to attain there is, I presume, production. Likewise, I assume you agree that people will consume. More, beyond production and consumption, is there some

regulation of what is produced and in what quantity? The alternative would be that anyone can produce anything, with no concern other than that they wish to. This is nonsense, but if there is regulation of how resources, energies, and labor are allocated to generate outputs, does that regulation reflect the preferences that both producers and consumers have and especially a full valuation of the relative contribution to well being and development of different choices? If it does, then to that extent it includes "money." The valuations are prices, albeit not necessarily as we have known them in market and centrally planned systems.

In turn, do people receive a share of the product? Obviously they must if they are to survive, much less attain their capacities. So, that being true, is there any correlation between the share one gets and what one does as one's work? If not, anyone can take anything, in any amount, and do no work - which, of course, is absurd, since demand would exceed supply. If there is a correlation, however, then there are to that extent "wages" according to some norm, even if the correlation is due to people collectively and responsibly establishing their own incomes. In parecon, these are the reasons why there are "money" and "wages." The task becomes having this

limited money and wages, which is to say valuations and shares of income, inevitably present in any economy, in accord with our full aspirations and values.

Money - more importantly, relative valuations of products and processes - exists in a parecon, therefore, so that people might make choices in light of full and true social costs and benefits. Participatory planning facilitates the determination of true and full values as decided by the self managing population.

Wages - more importantly, shares of social product allotted to citizens - exists in a parecon so that, of course, we can all equitably benefit from the social product, and specifically so that choices regarding such things as how long people work, how hard we work, producing what items, and what we justly consume, can be determined by the population, again, in accord with true social costs and benefits and, as well, with attaining equitable outcomes and self management.

I would claim, and the book does claim, that parecon is not only a serious economy able to meet needs, develop potentials, incorporate true self management, and be not just profitless but, beyond that, classless - but is also as close to having no money and no wages as is possible without incurring immense damage. That is, it has valuations and it has income shares, like any economy, but not the pejorative aspects of either - distinguishing it from all capitalist, market, or centrally planned economies. ■

Michael Albert, ZNet / Z Magazine

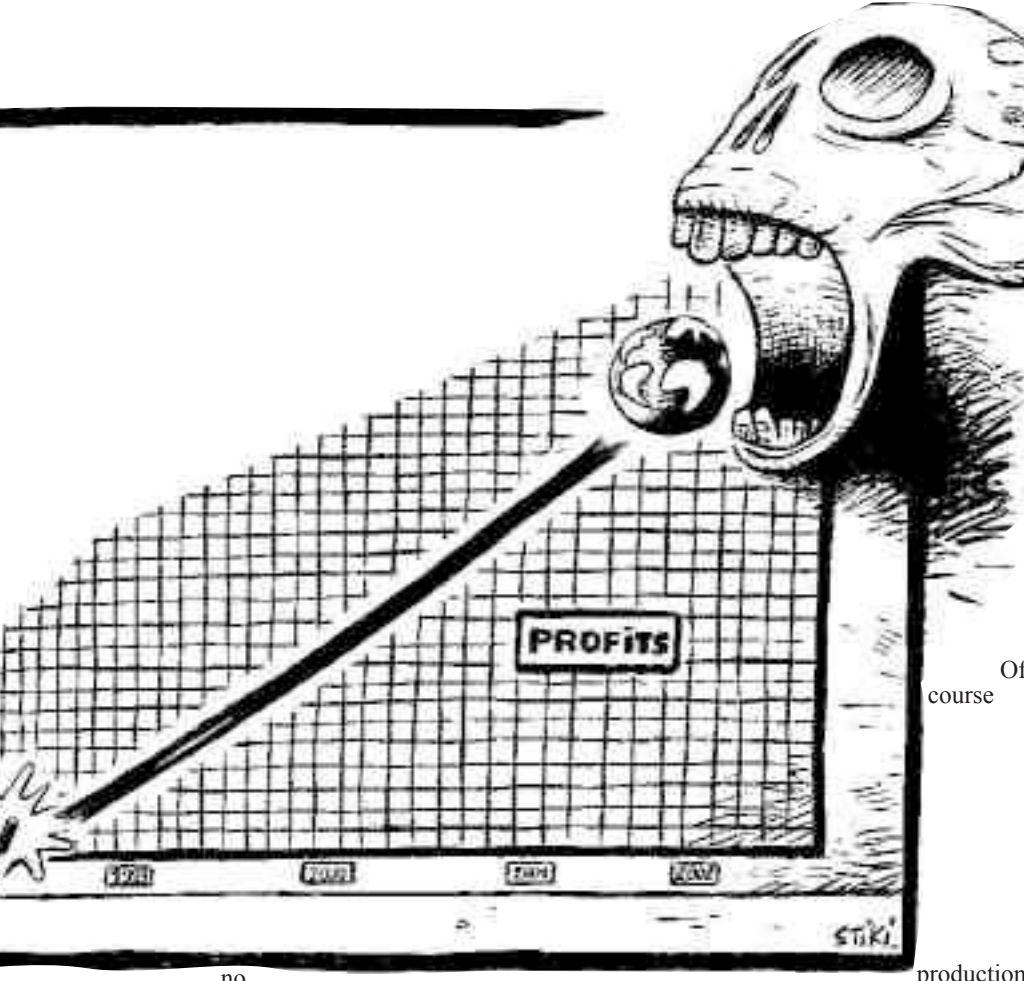
Reply:

The gist of your complaint is that, contrary to the claim made in the review of your book Parecon in the February Socialist Standard, you maintain that there are no profits in parecon because "no one earns income based on ownership of any kind. There are, therefore, no profits - none". But this is only because you have defined profit as a property income. It's still there, however, as you admit in your second paragraph above: "... some plants produce a total value of output greater, and in some cases much greater, than the total value of their inputs, including their labour". For profit to exist - or more generally "surplus value" (rent, interest and profit) - it is not necessary that these accrue to individuals through their ownership of property. Profit is simply the difference between expenditure and income and derives from the unpaid labour of the workers. Profits therefore existed in the former state-capitalist USSR and exist in the present-day Vatican - even though there is



Earn or Burn?





be able to take from the common store of wealth set aside for individual consumption what they judged they needed to live and enjoy life, irrespective of what they had contributed to production. Every able-bodied person would be expected to contribute something, but we don't share your bleak view that, in this event, not enough would be produced to satisfy people's needs (that "demand would exceed supply", as you put it) - and that therefore, not just profits, but the wages system too would have to be retained as a means of both obliging people to work and of limiting their consumption. Just like under capitalism.

Hence our original description of "parecon" as "post-capitalist capitalism", i.e. not post-capitalism at all. We would be prepared to refer to it as a "utopian blueprint for an ideal society" if you prefer.

■ Editors.

Rejoinder:

By any definition I have ever encountered, surpluses are not profits per se, though they may become profits under certain social relations, of course. Definitions aside, Parecon people's income, in any case, is not correlated to output, or to revenues minus expenditures, but to effort expended in socially valued production. No class takes income based on unpaid workers labor. No one does, other than those infirm and unable to work, that is. On the other hand, society and each of its members very much benefits if the total social product per time worked and inputs used up, is more, rather than less, socially valuable.

Saying that if a firm produces things of greater social value than it uses up, that means there are profits and the system is capitalist, is, honestly, absurd. In any economy, from now until the sun burns out and beyond, one will want workplaces of humans to actually generate more worth than they use up, of course. How the social product is then dispersed among the population is a very important issue, to be sure. Doing it according to effort, having also eliminated not only private owners above workers, but a coordinator class above workers, by balancing job complexes and instituting self management, is equitable.

Our real difference is probably best encapsulated in your calling the old Soviet

no individual ownership.

On page 132 of your book the rate of profit appears under the guise of "benefit cost ratio":

"Each round of planning, or iteration, yields a new set of proposed activities.

Taken together, these proposals yield new data regarding the status of each good, the average consumption per person, and the average production 'benefit cost ratio' per firm. All this allows for calculation of new price projections and new predictions for average income and work, which in turn lead to modifications in proposals ..."

<http://www.zmag.org/books/pareconv/parefina.htm> (Chapter 8, subsection: Proceeding From One Proposal To Another)

You say the "benefit cost ratio" has nothing to do with profit because the "benefit cost ratio" will only benefit parecon society as a whole and not any individual. But as we have seen, this is based on a misunderstanding of what profit means. Moreover, you also claim on the same page in your book that:

"...workers' councils whose ratios of social benefits of their outputs to social costs of their inputs were lower than average would come under pressure to increase either efficiency or effort..."

Or go bust, presumably, unless profits were redistributed from workers' councils with above average ratios. This shows the limits of planning in "parecon", for in their planning considerations they must maintain profit rates. And while planning might be based on past or current profit rates, profits themselves are inherently unpredictable and this may scupper plans for the future. There is also the antagonism between wages and profits. Parecon society would need to maintain a positive rate of profit or lurch into crisis. This means that workers could not push up wages to the level that stopped profits being made, and this again sets definite limits to what can be planned.

and consumption will be regulated in a socialist society. That's an essential part of it, but this does not require recourse to money either as a means of exchange or for costing products and production.

Calculation - and "costing" - in socialism will take place in kind (in tonnes of steel, kilowatt-hours of electricity, person-hours of work and so on) without having to put a monetary value on anything and everything. Socialist society will decide - through democratic discussion and from what people indicate they want by what they take from the common stores - what it needs to satisfy individual and collective consumption, and to replace and expand (if need be) the productive apparatus and then will bring together the physical and human resources to produce this. This will be done in the most technically efficient way, after taking into account good working conditions and environmental considerations.

In implementing the long-standing

socialist principle of "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs", socialist society breaks the link between work done and consumption. Rather than being "allotted" what to consume as under "parecon", people would



Social wealth - or social profit?



CAPITALISM

Union state capitalist, and my saying that since it didn't have private owners of means of production, and it didn't have markets, but it did have a ruling economic class composed of those monopolizing empowering tasks in the economy, it is far more sensibly called not capitalist, not socialist, but coordinatorist, after its ruling class.

I share your desire that a future desirable economy involve workers and consumers cooperatively negotiating economic activities and their distribution. That is what parecon accomplishes. Given space limits, I guess for now we just have to agree to disagree about a lot, beyond that

desire, however. ■
Michael Albert

Reply:

It is only under capitalism that the social surplus takes the form of a monetary surplus value and, as you admit, this is what will exist in "parecon". And this is what will be the imperative guiding and limiting its planning decisions. The institutional changes you advocate (no legal individual ownership of means of production, self-management, etc.) are inadequate reasons for claiming that capitalism has been overthrown.

We agree that the former Soviet Union did have a ruling class, but not that there were no markets there. Even the regime's ideologists admitted that there was "commodity-production", i.e. production for sale, and that buying and selling relationships existed between state enterprises. While there was no individual legal ownership of the main means of production (though there was of some things: dachas, works of art, state bonds, bank accounts), these means of production were not owned by society as a whole but effectively by a class which monopolised them, via the state, and which lived a privileged life from the surplus value extracted from the wage-labour of the workers. That is why we think the best description of that and similar societies was state capitalist.

Your attitude towards the former Soviet Union is revealing in that it shows that you had nothing against the continued existence there of the key features of capitalism that are production for sale, money, wages,

profits, etc but only to the fact that the economic system involving these was controlled by a privileged ruling class and not democratically by the workers. "Parecon" is thus revealed to be the idea of the economic system that existed in Russia "self-managed" by the workers. A sort of "self-managed capitalism" that could only exist on paper.

Socialism will break free from the financial bureaucracy of capitalist calculation. It will treat people as ends in themselves. It will produce directly for human needs. It will break the link between individual effort and individual consumption. That's what all those who consider themselves to be anti-capitalist should be aiming at. ■

Editors.



1906 - 2006 A Hundred Years of the Labour Party

The Socialist Party was formed in 1904. The Labour Party didn't come into being until two years later when a number of Labour and Liberal-Labour MPs, elected at the 1906 general election, set up a parliamentary group. We look at the Labour Party's dismal anti-socialist performance over the last hundred years.

The 1906 General Election is memorable for two reasons. Firstly, the Liberal Party won a remarkable landslide victory, returning 400 MPs to Parliament. Secondly the fledgling Labour Representation Committee (LRC), under the leadership of James Keir Hardie, trebled its vote to gain 27 parliamentary seats, increasing its representation to 29. These dramatic gains prompted the LRC to rename itself and a little over 100 years ago, in February 1906, the Labour Party came into being.

The earlier decision to set up the LRC was a response to dire working class poverty and more particularly to the legal threat to the trade unions, which were attempting to ameliorate these conditions. Throughout the nineteenth century the state had consciously obstructed collective bargaining, even though legislation passed during the 1870s exempted trade disputes from the conspiracy laws and legalised peaceful picketing. The 'new unionism' of the 1880s rapidly expanded trade union representation and, combined with the success of the London Dockers' strike of 1889, raised concerns that working people were becoming too organised and might mount a challenge to the owners' interests. The state and employers propagated the notion that unions were synonymous with 'socialism', which they claimed would lead to social disintegration, and they looked to the courts to weaken emerging unionisation that might defy the domination of capital.

The trade unions became receptive to the idea of parliamentary representation shortly after



The Labour Representation Committee - 1906



The Dock Strike of 1889 the great engineering lockout in 1897-8 and then the Lyons v Wilkins judgement of 1899 which reversed the provisions of the 1876 Trade Union Act that had allowed for peaceful picketing. The 1899 Trade Union Congress proposed a meeting between union representatives, the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabians and the Independent Labour Party to seek agreement on an agenda for parliamentary representation to secure political protection for 'free negotiation' with employers. The subsequent conference held in February 1900 agreed that the LRC would be supported by trade union affiliation fees and it elected Ramsay MacDonald as the new organisation's secretary.



Keir Hardie holding forth

was convinced that capitalism could be humanised by reforms and refused to entertain any notion that the organisation should advocate socialism as an immediately realisable objective. Instead, its task was to reform capitalism and strive for a 'level playing field' to enable workers to negotiate 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay' without state interference.

Trade union affiliations to the LRC were boosted after a disastrous strike in August 1900 by workers in the Taff Vale Railway Company. The workers demanded better working conditions and the right to join a trade union - the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS). The strike was broken and the employers pressed their advantage by fighting and winning a legal action for damages against the ASRS, thereby pushing the

union to bankruptcy and making future union strike action virtually impossible. This threat to trade unionism served to reaffirm the LRC's contention that only by winning political power could workers influence their conditions within capitalism, which in this case meant passing laws to reverse the court's decision and legalise industrial action.

Despite its weakness, the LRC ran 15 candidates in October 1900 and won two parliamentary seats - Keir Hardie winning Merthyr and Richard Bell taking Derby.

To many unions, however, affiliation to the LRC was not an automatic choice. A succession of unsympathetic Conservative governments between 1885 and 1905 had compelled unions to look to the Liberal opposition for support, although by 1900 some doubts had arisen about the Liberals' genuine commitment to trade unionism. Nevertheless many trade unions continued to support the Liberals and, in the same 1906 election that saw the LRC make its dramatic gains, 24 trade unionists were elected as Liberal MPs.

It would be misleading, however, to regard the LRC's 1906 electoral gains as

altogether surprising. They were in fact largely attributable to the organisation's willingness to make alliances with avowedly capitalist political organisations and in particular with the Liberal Party. As an organisation pledged to maintaining and eventually administering the capitalist system, the LRC saw no inconsistency to agreeing an electoral pact with the Liberal Party in 1903, whereby the Liberals agreed to run only one candidate in certain two-member constituencies, leaving the other anti-Tory candidate to come from LRC. The Liberals were eager to avoid splitting the anti-Conservative vote and the LRC was eager to increase its influence.

The fact that such a pact was forged says much about the intentions of the LRC and the later Labour Party. The Party's objective was to protect workers' conditions by striving to administer the system and to give workers a 'fair deal' within capitalism. The LRC and Labour Party never looked beyond this

objective and accordingly did everything in their power to mute any overt hostility to the capitalist system or attract opposition from the owners and their government. Ramsay MacDonald exemplified this strain of thought, arguing that the theories of Marx, the class struggle and the necessity of a politically conscious socialist working class without leaders enacting the social revolution were outdated and invalid notions. Instead, he embraced the views of Bernstein and the German

'Revisionists', that 'socialism' would come about gradually

within the existing structure of society and develop as a result of the growing success of capitalism. It was therefore determined that the Labour Party's task was to promote this success and to pass useful reforms that would theoretically steer the working class towards a distant socialist society. It was an organisation where 'immediate demands' within capitalism took priority over everything else.

Not unsurprisingly the first legislative measure of the new Labour Party and its Liberal allies was to reverse the Taff Vale judgement. This was achieved under the Trades Dispute Act of 1906. The Labour Party also made small amendments to the



Ramsay MacDonald - the theories of Marx were 'outdated and invalid notions'.



Sidney and Beatrice Webb - architects of the Labour reformist programme

Workingmen's Compensation Bill and the School Meals and Medical Inspections Act, but by 1907 the Party had run out of ideas and was reduced to simply accepting Liberal Party reforms. The passing of the Trades Dispute Act, however, coincided with a reduction in real wages and a rising tide of industrial disputes, and these factors encouraged further union affiliations to the Labour Party. The affiliation of the Miners' Federation in 1909 was of major importance, since mineworkers' votes cast in favour of the Labour Party represented potentially another 60 parliamentary seats. Potential became reality in 1918 when the Liberal electoral pact was no longer in operation.

By the end of the First World War - in which the Labour Party abandoned any class solidarity and enthusiastically supported British capitalism - it was well on its way to becoming the main opposition in parliament. Towards the end of the war the planned extension of the franchise, combined with the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia, prompted the Labour Party to redraft its constitution under the influence of the 'radical' Sidney Webb. The recast constitution included the famous Clause Four that was intended to appeal to the anticipated 'leftward' swing in public opinion and to draw a clear distinction between Labour and the Liberals by committing the Labour Party to nationalisation or state-run capitalism.

“At no time in its history has the Labour Party advocated revolution for socialism, but rather, relied on the pretence that state-run capitalism and reforms represented 'stepping stones' to a socialist society.”

The Labour Party participated in minority administrations in 1924 and again in 1929, but it had to wait until 1945 - and the carnage of another World War, in which it again wholeheartedly supported British capitalism - before fully completing the transformation from trade union parliamentary pressure group to a party of capitalist rule. The 1945 Labour government is best remembered for its programme of nationalisation that was touted as solving many of the problems of working people but failed miserably to do so. It is also remembered for its welfare reforms which were presented as bringing improvement to working-class conditions of life but whose main aim was to improve the efficiency of working men and women without provoking a general wage increase. Further opportunities for Labour Party management of British capitalism occurred in 1964 under Harold Wilson, in 1974 first under Wilson again and then James Callaghan, and finally under Tony Blair from 1997.

Given its early history it is hardly surprising that the Labour Party should have developed in this way. The LRC and later the Labour Party were never organised to challenge capitalism or eradicate the irreconcilable class differences between the working class and the owning class that lives on expropriated labour by virtue of their ownership of the means of producing and distributing wealth. At no time in its history has the Labour Party advocated revolution for socialism, but rather, until relatively recently anyway, relied on a cynical propagation of the pretence that state-run capitalism and reforms represented 'stepping stones' to a socialist society.

The Labour Party consciously steered the social-democratic or socialist movement of the early twentieth century away from social revolution to a futile policy of 'reformism', maintaining unswerving support for the exploitation of working people, the wages system, commodity production and the private ownership of the means of producing wealth. The one-hundred-year history of the Labour Party is one of deceit and opportunism that has given a bad name to socialism and induced working people to hand political power to representatives of their class enemy to administer capitalism against the working class interests that Labour has pretended to represent. ■

STEVE TROTT

More dirty work - in the Atlantic

Between 1965 and 1972, the British government expelled, deported or forced out the indigenous people of the Chagos Islands, and particularly Diego Garcia, known as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). This was because it had signed a "defence" agreement with the United States, leasing the islands to the US for an intelligence, military, and naval base and, later, a nuclear and fuelling depot for long-range bombers. The BIOT is located strategically in the centre of the Indian Ocean, so controlling it



Above: Lord Triesman; US B52 Bombers at Diego Garcia

provides power and influence in the whole of Southern Asia and much of the Middle East. (See "Dirty Work in the Indian Ocean", *Socialist Standard*, September 1996.)

History may never actually repeat itself exactly, but the present situation on the island of Ascension, midway between Africa and South America in the Atlantic Ocean, is very similar.

In 1956, the British government leased to the United States Wakefield Airfield, now a top-secret base on Ascension. According to the *Observer* (12.02.06), it is one of the Pentagon's most important military communications hubs; and is also used for troop deployments. Cable & Wireless and the BBC also have facilities on the island. Furthermore, Ascension is 1,000 miles off the oil-rich coast of West Africa.

About 1,100 people live on Ascension Island, some indigenous, many of them from St. Helena 750 miles to the south, and most of them British citizens. According to the *Observer* of the same date, after the Human Rights Act was adopted by the British government in 1998, the then Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, published a White Paper with the aim of bringing democracy to the island, as well as establishing a right of permanent abode, and full property rights, for all residents. Previously, although many of the islanders were born there, they were, and still are, only allowed to remain as long as they have jobs. In 1999, the British government pledged that this would change. Following Ascension's first general election in 2002, a local council was formed which went on to create a national park on the extinct volcano in the centre of the island. There was a plan to encourage eco-tourism to take advantage of the unique plant and seabird species, first

discovered by Charles Darwin in 1844. Many of the islanders bought shops and other small businesses. But it was all to no avail.

In January this year, the Foreign Office minister, one Lord Triesman, wrote to the Islanders informing them that the government had changed its plans, and that "they would not have a right of abode or right of tenure". They would be thrown out if necessary. Says the *Observer*:

"The Foreign Office is accused of covering up the true reason for its change in heart. Many blame the Pentagon for pressuring Britain. They believe the US wants to expand its military operations on the island and objected to plans to increase tourism. Washington does not want its activities to be subject to unwanted scrutiny. The west African coast has become of increasing strategic interest to the US, with discoveries of oil that have turned countries such as Equatorial Guinea into wealthy trading partners."

And Lord Triesman, who has allegedly bowed to the Pentagon's wishes, or dictates? He is better known as David Triesman who, as a sociology student at the University of Essex in the summer term of 1968, was suspended, but was later reinstated following a student occupation of the university. And who wrote an essay, "The CIA and Student Politics", in a Penguin Special book, *Student Power, Problems, Diagnosis, Action*, in which he exposed the CIA for financing and largely controlling the International Student conference and British NUS, adding: "The generation developing in this country will not want to pay mere lip service to the international struggle against imperialism, colonialism and racism; it will be in conflict with capitalism as the parent of these enemies."

It would seem that the good Lord Triesman has since changed his mind regarding American imperialism, the CIA and capitalism. ■

PETER E. NEWELL

More about a socialist scenario

Last month we discussed four scenarios outlined in a report by Foresight, a government thinktank, on transport over the next 50 years. We briefly described a fifth missing scenario - a socialist one, concentrating on transport. This month we add some more to a socialist scenario.

First politics. The Foresight report lists 60 "key drivers for change". The only one that is overtly political is "Decline in power of national governments", although "Culture of control" and "New decision-making frameworks" have political implications. Any socialist scenario has a central place for democracy, but not democracy as it is usually defined in capitalism. Socialist democracy is based on sharing in planning and decision-making, not having plans and decisions imposed on oneself or imposing them on others.

In socialism there will be no professional politicians - no one having an income from being elected. Access to goods and services will be free (made possible by the free work given to society by its members) for everybody, including individuals elected or appointed as delegates or representatives at various levels. In capitalism these levels are generally something like local, regional or global. There may well be some continuity in these levels, but as the socialist movement grows there will probably also be changes, reflecting different circumstances in different parts of the world.

Then **education.** The Foresight report says very little about this. Schools are



Education - for the socialists of tomorrow?

mentioned as an economic resource and "the growing crisis in higher education" is noted - and that's about it. A socialist scenario must have a great deal to say about education. Its aim will be to prepare people - participants, not consumers - to live in socialist society. There is education required to help bring about socialism as well as education as a feature of socialist society. The effort now put into socialist education is severely limited by lack of active socialists and money. Imagine what could be achieved if socialist schools, ► page 16



Cooking the Books (2)

Capitalism for ever?

On 2 March Jacques Attali, author of a recent biography of Marx in French (and former top adviser to President Mitterrand

and former head of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), gave a talk with historian Eric Hobsbawm on "Marx for the 21st century" at the Jewish Book Fair in London.

Interviewed in the *Guardian* (25 February) he was reported as saying:

"Contrary to popular belief, Marx was not mistaken: capitalism will fall and be replaced by a socialist system. The only question is when. 'For Marx the fall of the rate of profit will appear when capitalism has exhausted its capacity for growth, which is not the case,' he says. 'Socialism will come after this.'"

Marx did indeed think that capitalism would prepare the way for and eventually be replaced by socialism (which Attali correctly identifies, both in his book and in

his talk, as a world non-market society in which money will have no place and in which goods and services will be freely available for people to take and use). And he could be interpreted as having argued (in the *Grundrisse*, in the section in Notebook VII on "Contradiction between the foundations of bourgeois production (value as measure) and its development") that, if capitalism were to continue long enough, productivity would eventually rise to such a level that the unit price of goods would fall so low (their labour-time content being so small) that they would be virtually free and that the prospect of making a profit would therefore be so low that the economic mechanism of capitalism would seize up.

Attali's reported answer here implies that Marx really thought that socialism would only come when capitalism had reached that stage. Which it clearly hasn't. So, capitalism would still have some way to go, until in fact it had not only come to dominate the globe (as at present and for at least a century) but had come to exist everywhere including in the currently "undeveloped" parts of the world in Asia, Latin America and Africa. Until, in short, capitalist globalisation had run its full

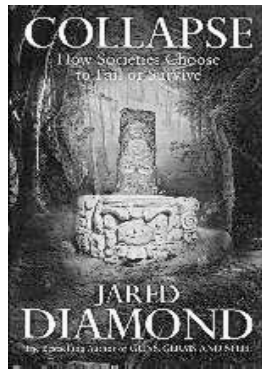
course.

Marx certainly thought that in his day capitalism still had some years to go before it could be replaced by socialism (which is why he supported non-socialist developments within capitalism which he thought would speed up the development of capitalism and with it the material basis for socialism, such as free trade, the victory of the North in the American Civil War, and German unity). But it is doubtful whether the passage from the *Grundrisse* was anything more than Marx saying what would eventually happen if capitalism were to go on for long enough. In other words, that there were theoretical reasons why capitalism could not literally go on forever. It did have an economic limit, even if this would be far into the future.

Marx can't be interpreted as saying that capitalism would, or should, continue for that long. His activities as a revolutionary socialist clearly showed that, on the contrary, he thought that capitalism could, and should, be ended by conscious working class action long before it reached its theoretical limit.

Protect and Survive

Jared Diamond: Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive. Penguin £9.99



This is another erudite yet readable book by Jared Diamond, following on from *The Rise and Fall of the T h i r d Chimpanzee* and *Guns, Germs and Steel*. His theme this time is how and why past societies have or have not collapsed, and how an understanding of such issues may be of help in the present-day world. The Maya civilisation of central America, for instance, collapsed in the early tenth century CE, after a period of 700 years or so. A number of contributing causes can be distinguished: population outgrew available resources, deforestation reduced the amount of available farmland, fighting among the Maya increased, a severe drought occurred, and the rulers had no interest in long-term concerns.

Diamond distinguishes five points that are generally relevant to societal collapse: environmental damage, climate change, hostile neighbours, friendly trade partners, and a society's responses to its environmental problems. Often, for instance, forest will be removed and soil eroded, or newly-introduced animals may eat native species or destroy crops: all this may cut the numbers who can survive in a particular area. Destroying unrenueable resources is particularly crucial. Unfriendly nearby societies can also play their part in disrupting production and everyday life. Globalisation has increased the importance of other (not necessarily nearby) parts of the world: China, for instance, accepts untreated garbage, including toxic waste, from other countries (for a fee, of course).

Like his other works, *Collapse* is wide-ranging and thought-provoking, containing much material that we can't do justice to here. A useful chapter on the Rwanda massacres of the 1990s makes the point that it was not a simple matter of Hutu against Tutsi. Many other factors played a part, including population pressure and falling world coffee prices. The final chapter asks what all the facts and theories that have been marshalled before mean to us today, emphasising 'the unsustainability of a world in which the Third World's large population were to reach and maintain current First World living standards.' Diamond's conclusion is that we need 'the political will to apply solutions already available', as if it were merely a matter of convincing politicians to do the right thing.

In fact he is far too uncritical in his acceptance of capitalism as the framework within which present-day problems have to be solved. He is well aware that companies exist to make profits, not as charities concerned to protect the environment. Yet, he says, it is not enough to blame ► page 18

Alternative voice

Democracy Now! Pacifica Radio.
<http://www.democracynow.org/>



"Independent media has a crucial responsibility to go to where the silence is to represent the diverse voices of people engaged in dissent." Thus is the journalistic philosophy of Amy Goodman, host and executive producer of the New York-based radio/television news programme *Democracy Now!*, now in its tenth year. True to her vision, Goodman's one-hour show covers the stories ignored or suppressed by the corporate-sponsored media, and provides a platform for the politically underrepresented to give their views and commentary on stories reported by the mainstream news. Artists, leftist academics, peace activists, whistleblowers, union representatives, and independent journalists make up the majority of those interviewed. In many respects, then, *Democracy Now!* is like a daily edition of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, reporting on the activities of various segments of the working class to resist political and economic oppression.

Each show begins with Amy Goodman delivering ten minutes of headline news; while there is a tendency to focus on American politics, the show is much more international in scope than most other American news programmes. The remaining fifty minutes explores one or two stories in further detail via interviews or a live debate between a prominent activist or academic and a government spokesperson. Past guests have included academics Norman Finkelstein, Noam Chomsky, and Howard Zinn; authors Alice Walker, Arundhati Roy, and Salman Rushdie; and spokespeople from civil rights and activist groups such as Greenpeace and the American Civil Liberties Union. The plethora of voices critical of the government and society is a welcome diversion from the business and government cronies featured on most corporate news programmes. (And unlike other so-called "independent" or "public" media outlets, *Democracy Now!* is funded entirely by listeners, viewers, and foundations; they run no advertising and do not accept donations from corporations or governments.)

If the show has one fault, it is that it sometimes assumes a particular political group or ideology must have merit simply because its views are in the minority. Such was the case with a February show commemorating the assassination of black nationalist leader Malcolm X. Guests were brought in to heap praises upon the man, and a long excerpt from his speech "The Ballot or the Bullet" was played. No comment or criticism was made on his ►

colleges, universities and distance learning projects were set up which treated capitalism critically and socialism sympathetically.

Socialists have long speculated about how education will differ in socialism as compared with capitalism. William Morris sought to narrow the differences between learning manual skills and book-learning. His pre-electronic predictions need updating, but there is also a case that education in socialism will not be as dominated by electronic gadgetry as capitalist education now is.

The way people **work** gets some mention in the Foresight report - "Movement away from office-based working" is one of the 60 Drivers for change. A socialist scenario has much more to say about work as a necessary, creative and satisfying activity. In socialism all the work required only to run capitalism will no longer be needed - no banking, insurance, financial services, sales and all money-related jobs will go. Harmful occupations connected with the "defence" (war) industry will be a thing of the past.

The elimination of work that keeps capitalism going will mean a vast expansion in the potential for useful work in socialism. Employment, and its flip-side unemployment, will be consigned to history. People like to do work that is useful to themselves, others and the society in which they live. Once financial coercion is removed there is no reason to suppose that there will be a shortage of volunteers. Obviously, men and women will prefer work that suits their abilities and interests, as well as the chance for change. Joy in work - in the past a privilege afforded only to the minority - will be available to all.

Lastly the **media**. The Foresight report does have something to say on this, but only the technical side. "Satellite location devices", "Smart antenna" and "Increasing use of 'telepresence' technology" are included in the Drivers for change. A socialist scenario may well have a view on such changes. But it will also be concerned with the content of the media, how that content is decided, and the circumstances in which it is used as a means of communication, information and education.

In contemporary capitalism, as Chomsky and others have pointed out, the ideal is that each person should be alone in front of a screen, subject to what they see and hear, deprived of opportunities to discover what they really think through communication and interaction with others. In socialism the media will be democratically organised and controlled, not manipulated by political and commercial interests. No need to write programs for future media output and input. But you can be sure that it will reflect and be part of a happier and less problem-ridden world than capitalism. ■

STAN PARKER



East Anglia

Saturday 8 April, 12 noon to 4pm

12 noon: informal chat

1pm: meal

2pm to 4pm: Discussion of Conference Agenda and future activity

Venue: The Conservatory, backroom of Rosary Tavern, Rosary Road, Norwich.

All welcome.

Swansea

Monday 10 April, 7.30pm

GLOBALISATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Unitarian Church (next to Argos), High St, Swansea.

Chiswick

Tuesday 18 April, 8pm

RUSSIA: REPORT ON A RECENT VISIT

Speaker: Vincent Otter

Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4

(nearest tube: Chiswick Park)

Central London

Saturday 22 April, 3pm

FREE SOFTWARE: DOTCOMMUNISM?

Speaker: Tristan Miller

Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4

Socialist Party Annual Conference

Friday 14 April 10.30 to 6pm. Saturday 15 April 11 to 6pm

Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4.

SOCIAL (with food): Friday 14 April, 7pm. Manor Arms, Clapham Manor St, SW4 (nearest tube: Clapham North).

racist-separatist agenda, nor on his suggestion that the "black community" would be better off if blacks ran their own economy. Goodman, who is usually unafraid to pose hard-hitting questions, neglected to challenge the ludicrous implication that black workers would be any less exploited serving black masters than white ones.

Nonetheless, *Democracy Now!* serves a useful purpose in bringing underreported stories and views to the forefront. Until socialists can establish their own news programme, Goodman's show is a good supplement or even outright replacement for the corporate nightly news.

Democracy Now! is broadcast in London on Resonance 104.4 FM Thursdays at 11:00; across Europe on Sky Digital channel 0122 Monday to Friday at 15:00; and on the Internet via RealAudio, RealVideo, MP3, or Ogg Vorbis at

<http://www.democracynow.org/>.

TRISTAN MILLER

Edinburgh and Glasgow

Branches

DAY SCHOOL FOR SATURDAY 13 MAY 2006

In the Community Central Halls, 314 Maryhill Road, Glasgow

THE CHANGING FACE OF CAPITALISM

1.00pm to 2.15pm

WHAT NEXT FOR THE TRADE UNIONS?

The trade union movement has played an important part in the development of working class ideas, but now it finds itself in a crisis. Its political product the Labour Party has proven to be just another capitalist party. Brian Gardner (Glasgow Branch) considers the dilemma that it faces with the worsening of pension conditions and the insecurity of modern technology.

2.15pm to 3.30pm

THE DEATH OF THE LEFT?

The demise of the Russian and eastern European Communist Parties has led to a crisis on the so-called left. Various Leninist and Trotskyist groups claim to be socialist organisations. In this talk Paul Bennett (Manchester Branch) deals with their claims and offers the alternative of World Socialism with its rejection of leadership and the reform of capitalism.

3.30pm to 5.00pm

CAPITALISM? KIDS' STUFF

In this session we play a 50 minute DVD *Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff* that likens the development of capitalism to a children's nursery. We examine how ownership gives rise to the state and all its coercive forces. We look at alternative ways of running society. We look at a moneyless, tradeless alternative to the profit system. This DVD was devised by and features Paddy Shannon (Lancaster Branch) He will deal with your questions and ideas.

Tea, coffee and light refreshments will be available, free of charge.

All welcome.

Summer School, Fircroft, 21-23 July, 2006

WHAT'S LEFT OF THE LEFT? Retreated or Defeated?

A slightly different format this year. Some speakers, but also some discussions groups considering papers and notes from overseas socialists. The object is to try to build up a global picture of the state of opposition to capitalism: what attacking moves and defences capitalist governments have made and what threats and/or opportunities this presents to the socialist movement.

Fircroft College has kindly held back its price increases so that we can maximise our numbers attending. Non-members are welcome. Full board for the weekend is £110. The Party can subsidise a small number of those attending at half price, but it's best to apply early. Free entry to all talks and discussion sessions.

For further information or booking a place (please don't leave it too late!) ring Ron Cook, 0121 553 1712

World Socialist Literature



World Socialist Review: the journal of the World Socialist Movement in the United States. £1.30 including postage. Socialist Banner: the quarterly journal of the World Socialist Movement in Africa. £1.00 including postage.

From The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

letters continued

I think that if it was quite as easy as that then there would no longer be a problem. It is a matter of class and geography and history (and sex, race and more) as to how you are treated, what your chances are and how your life will pan out or whether you will live through your first year to have a life at all. None of these are circumstances of your own making. In Britain - increasingly, geography is helping make class - but that is another story altogether.

DANNY DORLING, SHEFFIELD

Reply: We have no quarrel with the idea that a person's date and place of birth affects their chances in life. And we assume you wouldn't deny that class enters into the picture too. Our article dealt not with infant mortality but with the kind of job people are likely to have. There is no middle class (they're part of the working class). And it's the class people are born into (working class or capitalist) that

determines whether they will need to worry about working for a living. We appeal to workers on the basis of their class interests, not the question of being from Yorkshire or Iceland. Not everyone can move to Iceland, but we can get rid of class divisions. - Editors.

WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
- Can't make it to a meeting?
- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

Join the forum via
www.worldsocialism.org

from page 16

companies, for 'ultimate responsibility' lies with us, 'the public', since we supposedly have the power to make destructive environmental policies unprofitable, e.g. by means of consumer boycotts or pressurising politicians to pass laws that force businesses to clean up the mess they have created. Sadly, this ignores the fact that capitalism needs profits and, while companies will sometimes be keen to play the environmental card if it suits them, they have to put profits first. No amount of legislation or boycotting can change this.

So the c-word to ponder is not 'collapse' or 'climate' but 'capitalism'. And the political will that matters is the will to replace capitalism with a sensibly-organised society, within which problems can be tackled in a way much more likely to yield effective solutions.

PB



Stalin the God and Stalin the Gangster

So the Stalin legend is ended, struck down by the hands that built it up. Three years after his death the Communist Party leaders of all nationalities who fawned on him and grovelled at his feet in his lifetime, and who slobbered hysterically at his funeral, vie with each other to speak ill of their dead hero. They now make charges that he was cowardly, conceited, ignorant and stupid, cunning and brutal, and his supposedly benevolent guidance of his admiring and loving people nothing but a betrayal of Communist ideals, a bestial reign of terror under which no voice of protest could be heard and no man of integrity was safe against arbitrary execution.

One thing we must, however, not forget. If the faction that wants to belittle Stalin carries the day we may expect the anti-Stalin campaign to be as richly ornamented with new lies as was the old campaign to build up the Stalin myth. History will be re-written again with no more regard for truth.

For the venal and sycophantic second-line leaders it is a cruel dilemma. While the dictator lived the drill was simple,. Since he was all-wise, when he turned they all turned; and fell over each other to praise his every tortuous twist of policy,. But, as has happened throughout history, the dictator's death launches his immediate circle into a bloody struggle for power, and the minor leaders and their followers suddenly have to make up their own minds which faction to support. So the British Communists are now anxiously disputing about the line they ought to follow,. This is the eventual fate of all organizations built up on leader-worship and Socialists can view their agonies with equanimity. The Communist Party has never been a force for Socialism and its disruption could only be a gain to the working class.



Stalin, by Picasso

(From editorial, *Socialist Standard*, April 1956)

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1.That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2.That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3.That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4.That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6.That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7.That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8.The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Hoey Hoo-Hah

Why does she stay in a party which, she says, imposes policies it was not elected on?

Say what you like about rebel Labour MPs, in most cases they are consistent - or should that be boringly predictable? *Foundation Hospitals?* Against. *War on Iraq?* Against. *Ban Hunting?* In favour. All tediously predictable. Then along comes Kate Hoey, Labour MP for Vauxhall, to upset the pattern. The big issue for Hoey - the one which has earned her the most publicity - has been her support for hunting which she demonstrated, on the day the "sport" was banned by Parliament, by riding out with the Beaufort Hunt. She says the ban is unenforceable, that it has actually made hunting more popular than ever: "It's part of the British rebellious streak that as soon as something is banned it becomes more attractive". Which raises the question of what she is doing in Parliament, where they lay down laws which ban all kinds of behaviour as a way of making them unattractive to even the most rebellious person. She has also said of the Labour Party: "They don't understand the countryside" - as if there is a lot more to "understand" than that the countryside is basically the same as the towns and cities, with a class structure which condemns one class to work for their living in varying degrees of poverty and insecurity.

Vauxhall

It is also fair to ask what drives her to be the MP for Vauxhall which, including Kennington, Stockwell and parts of Clapham and Brixton, is as far from what most people see as the "countryside" as it is possible to be. It is, in fact, one of the toughest parts of London. To ensure that everyone, including the long-suffering voters of Vauxhall, knew where she stood on hunting, Hoey took on the job of chairing the Countryside Alliance - an organisation which tells us it campaigns about rural poverty and the decline of the villages but which was mysteriously silent on these issues until the 1997 Labour victory brought the first ever real threat to hunting. It was unfortunate timing that Hoey announced her new, additional job on the day the police shot John Charles de Menezes - at Stockwell station, in her constituency. This ghastly event did not dampen the Countryside Alliance's joy at her elevation to lead them, which they said they were "delighted" about. Not all the voters of Vauxhall felt the same: many of them, worried about the living conditions there and the shooting at Stockwell, expressed their angry surprise that their MP had the time to take on so much extra work when she manages to attend only 55 percent of votes in the Commons.

But Hoey's record of rebellion extends beyond hunting. She is against foundation hospitals (although she was once in favour of hospital trusts, which many traditional Labour people feared would be a first step in betrayal of the NHS), against student top-up fees, the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill, compulsory ID cards, the war on Iraq... She protests that it the others who are out of step, that the measures she opposes were not in Labour's manifesto - as if it would have made any difference if they had been. And why does she stay in a party which, she says, imposes policies it was not elected on? Even the Tories are confused about her. In October 1996 the mischievous MP Giles Brandreth recorded in his diary that he plotted about her with Sebastian Coe:

"Why don't we find someone to defect to us? We decided Kate Hoey was our prime target. We like her, she seems sensible, she isn't valued by New Labour."

And more recently a Tory MP in the *Daily Telegraph* showed that little has changed with her: "She spends more time in our division lobby than on the other side."

Jowell

Quite what the fatigued electorate of Vauxhall think of the fact that they have elected a Labour MP who votes like a Tory will be apparent at the next election. Meanwhile they may take some kind of hint from Hoey's assessment of Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell and her husband David Mills with their labyrinthine mortgages and offshore financial manoeuvres. Perhaps she is jealous of a more durable female rival but Hoey refused to acquiesce in the orchestrated campaign from Number Ten designed to discredit the

exposure of Jowell as motivated by gender prejudice. She was one of those who wanted Jowell sacked from leading Labour's campaign in the local elections, for, she "...grew up in a Labour Party that thought that taking money out of the country wasn't a very loyal thing to do". In fact the vast majority of the people of Vauxhall are not rich enough to practice that kind of "disloyalty"; as Hoey put it: "Most people have enough trouble just getting one mortgage".



Hoey: 'as soon as something is banned it becomes more attractive'

Before she joined the Labour Party Hoey was a member of an obscure Trotskyist organisation, which she later explained by confessing that "I didn't have much contact with ordinary people. So I didn't understand their concerns" (Brian Deer interview, *Sunday Times Magazine* 8 August 1993). After that embarrassing spasm she sat as a councillor in Hackney and Southwark waiting, with other hopeful future Labour stars, for the offer of a winnable seat. Hoey's chance came when the sitting MP for Vauxhall, Stuart Holland, resigned from the Commons to take an academic job.

Holland, who was a disciple of Tony Benn, was described by a fellow member of the Lambeth Labour Party as "...pitifully eager to acquiesce in whatever absurdities Lambeth Labour cared to expound". Holland's departure came as a relief to Neil Kinnock, tempered by the fact that the constituency party intended to replace him with Martha Osamor who, with her similar ideas, seemed to be no less of an embarrassment to the Labour leadership. So Hoey was imposed on a resistant local party as a "moderniser" - a word with a meaning we are all aware of now. She won the by-election with a majority of over 15000.

Sports Minister

Realising her ambition to be the first woman Sports Minister (she had a qualification in Physical Education, she had been Ulster high jump champion and Educational Adviser to a number of football clubs including Arsenal and Chelsea) brought Hoey up against the spin doctors of Downing Street. Against instructions from Alastair Campbell she criticised the decision of Alex Ferguson (a special favourite of Blair's) to withdraw Manchester United from the 1999 FA Cup, saying that the club's supporters had been treated in "a quite shabby way". She officially complained about the MBE awarded to Arsenal striker Ian Wright, because his behaviour on the field - shouting and swearing at other players and the referee - made him a poor role model. She lasted only a couple of years in the job.

And now, on the back benches there seems little more by way of a political career left for her. There is still her writing for the *Daily Telegraph*, there is chairing the Countryside Alliance and doing her abrasive best to upset her party as she goes into the opposing voting lobby. And of course there may be her memoirs, which should have the words Tally Hoey in the title. If she hangs on to Vauxhall there will be the job of ministering to the people there who, in their poverty, bad housing, crime and pollution, can be expected to be feeling distinctly unministered to. Like most rebels, Hoey will need to work at living up to her own image. Recently in the *Daily Telegraph*, she was described as wearing a Gucci watch and a jacket trimmed with fake fur. She did not miss this chance to boost her reputation for reckless confession: "The fur" she responded "was real. The Gucci watch was fake", provoking a spokesman for the Trading Standards Institute to remind her of the realities of commodity society: "We deplore any public figure who seems to be celebrating the purchase of counterfeit items" he sniffed (which probably gained Hoey a few more votes in Vauxhall).

It was Oscar Wilde who once described Hoey's favourite pastime as "the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable". We may wonder what enduring, scathing epigram he would have fashioned about a Labour Minister indulging in such "sport" after her party had made all those promises about building a sustainably better society. Like all other "rebels" Hoey relies on the deception that she offers something so fresh and different that it has not been thought of before. In Wilde's absence let us sum up the futility of it all: the unmemorable in pursuit of the unpracticable. ■

IVAN



Voice from the Back



Salt In The Wound

The capitalist class hold the working class in contempt, but they seldom display it in such an arrogant fashion. "Workers at a doomed crisp factory yesterday slammed bosses' parting gift -

Walkers Workers - Fried, crisped, and hung out to dry

a free 36p bag of low salt and fat variety. Many of the 250 staff, who will lose their jobs when the Walkers' plant in Swansea shuts next month, blamed them" (*Daily Mirror*, 9 February). When executives lose their jobs they sometimes get a "golden handshake", but this is the first time we have heard of what amounts to a "Golden Wonder"

handshake.



Double Standards

In the USA at present, especially in border states, there is a great anti-immigration movement. Thus, with an election pending in Texas \$30 million is being

allocated to building three fences between the USA and Mexico. The trouble is, though, US capitalism needs cheap Mexican labour despite their political posturing. "Golden State Company which calls itself 'the top fence contractor in California' was recently caught for the second time in as many years employing illegal immigrants" (*Times*, 27 February).

When the fences don't work, for workers are good at dodging, the local authorities have got to get someone to evict Mexicans from the Land of the Free, so who do they get? Mexican immigrants - they're cheaper. "The city employs them to do it. They are paid to throw themselves off the land." Is capitalism a crazy society, or is it just us that think so?

Underhanded Censorship

The BBC often report on the government censorship that applies in the media. Only in foreign countries of course. Surely no one could imagine the BBC to be subject to government censorship. Think again.



Big Brother Corporation?

"The BBC launched a wartime purge on communists including Ewan MacColl, the folk singer and his wife Joan Littlewood, the theatre producer, documents declassified by MI5 reveal today.... From the late Thirties until the end of the Cold War, MI5 had an officer at the BBC to vet all editorial applicants, stamping the personnel records of anyone suspicious with a distinctively shaped green tag, or 'Christmas tree'" (*Observer*, 5 March).

Promises, Promises, Promises

The job of politicians is to promise things at election times and then explain later what stopped the promise from being kept, but promise things will be different next time. Here is a recent example. "Tony Blair pledged to cut the number of children living in poverty by a quarter, from 4.1 million in 1999 to 3.1 million by April 2006, as part of an ambitious three-stage drive to halve it by 2010 and eliminate the problem altogether by 2020.... new figures from the Department for Work and Pensions revealed it has fallen short by 300,000" (*Guardian*, 9 March). A red face for the Labour Party? Hardly. After all the 1945 Labour government promised to abolish poverty completely in its first term of office!

Aint What It Used To Be

"A billion just isn't what it used to be, said Luisa Kroll, Forbes magazine's associate

editor, revealing the 20th rich list in New York" (*BBC News*, 10 March). It is true there are a couple of songs that claim "Fings Ain't What They Used To Be" and "The Old Grey Mare Ain't What She Used To Be", but we imagine the billionaires on the latest role call won't be grieving too much. Bill Gates (\$50 billion), Warren Buffett (\$42 billion) and Carlos Slim (\$30 billion) can hardly be feeling nostalgic about the past.

The Rewards Of Age

After a lifetime of toil many workers look forward to the comfort and leisure of old age. Alas, for many it is just another of



A billion just don't pay the gas bills like it used to...

capitalism's illusions. "A third of pensioners are so poor that they cannot afford a day out or treat themselves to a meal in a pub, according to a report that paints a stark picture of retirement on a low income" (*Times*, 3 March). The report, published by the charity Age Concern, is entitled *Just Above The Breadline* and reports that many old workers are resorting to heating just one room, buying food on its sell-by-date and searching out second-hand clothes. As the Good Book says "Well done, good and faithful servant." But then you don't have to worry about that, do you? Because you will never grow old. Will you?

War Is Hell - For Some

The conflict in Iraq has killed and maimed thousands, destroyed housing and made life unbearable for millions, but it is not all bad news. "British businesses have profited by at least £1.1 billion since coalition forces toppled Saddam Hussein three years ago, the first comprehensive investigation into UK corporate investment in Iraq has found" (*Independent*, 13 March).

Free lunch

by Rigg

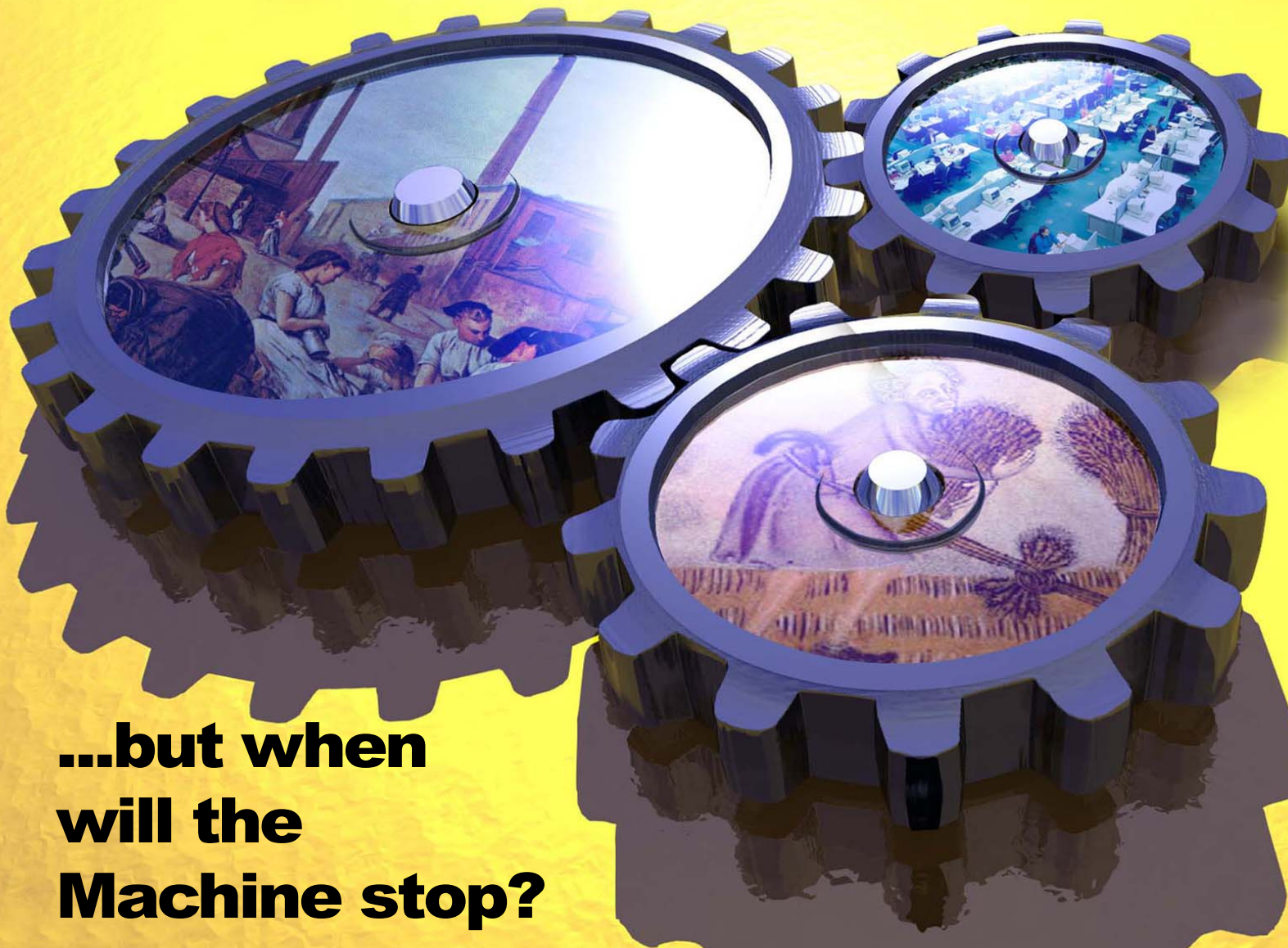


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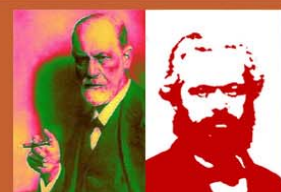
...but when will the Machine stop?



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The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 6th May** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.
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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial

Striking while the iron is hot

We have been pleased to see recently that in some parts of Europe the working class of wage and salary earners have been flexing their proverbial muscles. In France, millions have taken to the streets in protest at new employment laws aimed at the young, and have done so with some success as the French President, Jacques Chirac, has now withdrawn the proposals for fear of a further political backlash.

Here in Britain there has been the biggest strike wave for many years, and at a time when senior figures in the government are already at one another's throats. Years ago, Blair and Brown used to claim that the UK had one of the best records on industrial relations in the world. Indeed, in recent years the number of days lost through strike action in the UK have been a fraction of what they were in the 1980s and 90s, and 2004 saw the lowest number of individual disputes on record, at 130.

Recently all that has changed. First, university lecturers went on strike in early March (followed since by 'action short of a strike'), using the opportunity presented by the new system of tuition fees and funding to be introduced in higher education this year to extract pay increases from the employers' organisation. If successful, it is hoped that this would help close the relative pay gap that has opened up over the last 20 years and more between academics and other professions.

Then - and more significantly still - was the action by over a million state sector workers on 28th March. Across the UK, council buildings, and services such as libraries and day centres were shut down, schools and colleges were prevented from opening and other essential services (such as the Mersey tunnels and ferries, the Newcastle Metro, etc) did not operate. This was primarily over an attempt to change the terms and conditions of the main local

government workers' pension scheme, so that they would be forced to accept lower pensions or work longer. However, the union driving much of the strike action, UNISON, also claimed in one of their press releases that "this strike is against an attempt by the Government and the employers to see how far they can go. If they win on pensions they will try it on something else. This is a defining issue for the union".

Since this initial day of action others have been planned. Interestingly, UNISON have developed a tactic of encouraging smaller groups of their key workers (such as meat workers) to go on strike for a few days at a time on a rotating basis, so as to cause maximum disruption, and the union has effectively been paying many of these workers to take selective action out of its strike fund.

From a socialist perspective, it is good to see the working class fighting back in this way. The gains made by wage and salary workers over time on pay, pensions and other related issues have not, after all, been granted by benevolent governments or employers - they have been fought for, mainly by workers organised in trade unions.

If those gains are to be defended and consolidated, democratic and unified action by workers is necessary to put maximum pressure on employers and their representatives. But workers need to remember one thing - while such action is necessary within capitalism, there can be no lasting solution to the problems the market economy creates within the market system itself. It is the task of socialists to help those struggling within the system to see the bigger picture and recognise that lasting solutions to the problems faced by workers everywhere can only lie in removing the market economy and its imperatives from our lives completely.



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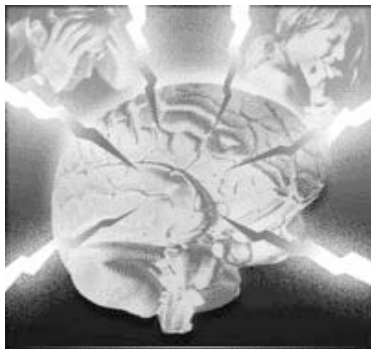
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Destressing society

We are always interested in constructive feedback and this month two professors respond to a piece from Pathfinders last October, on the question of animal testing. Kenneth Boyd, Professor of Medical Ethics and Director of

Clinical Skills at the University of Edinburgh:

"Very many thanks for the interesting article on science, socialism and the animal question, much of which I agree with. I am certainly not put off by socialism, with many of whose aims I also agree, not least its argument for being 'pragmatic' about animal testing. But how safe it is to 'assume, after capitalism, a dramatic fall in heart disease and obesity' and 'in poverty and stress-related diseases', I'm not sure. I think that's a matter of faith, rather than necessarily of 'evidence-based thinking', and the future all-too-often fails to turn out as we expect. In a way also, that assumption sounds too like the utopian claims of those in both the pro- and the anti-animal testing camps who argue on the one hand that if only we continue, and on the other that if only we abolish animal testing, all will be well. The danger in such claims, I think, is that they may distract us from doing whatever is possible, to create a more just and caring society and to relieve both human and animal suffering, in the present, despite all the obstacles presented by how power is currently exercised in the political and market arenas."

It is true that the original article makes the large assumption



that there will be a fall in the incidence of common stress-related diseases when the market system is superseded by communal ownership. Anyone who is not familiar with the socialist case might very well object that such an assumption is faith and not evidence-based. So how unsafe an assumption is it? The BUPA website lists the main causes of stress as follows (abridged):

- Work: job demands, long working hours, poor organisational skills and difficult relationships with colleagues. (Socialism will abolish coerced employment. People will choose where, when, how, who with and even whether they work).
- Life events: Major life events, such as losing a loved one, getting divorced, becoming a parent, moving house, changing jobs, becoming unemployed are all common causes of stress. (See above. Socialists have no plans to abolish birth, love and death however, which is why the assumption is of a fall in stress not the disappearance of it.)
- Money worries: According to the MORI research for the Samaritans, money worries were quoted as being one of the biggest causes of stress. Concerns about not having enough money to pay bills or worries about losing a job and a steady income are particularly stress-inducing. (Socialism will abolish money and therefore money problems, ergo, it will abolish one of the biggest stressors).
- Performance pressure: Many people find themselves receiving increasing demands from other people, whether at work or in their personal lives, and feel under pressure to perform well. (Socialism is a cooperative working concept, not competitive).

So much has been studied and written on stress that there is simply no point going any further into the subject here. Far from being a matter of faith, the evidence is overwhelming that modern capitalist society is stressful and that most of this stress is caused by money or insecurity over money, and the consequent knock-on effects this has on personal relationships. Is it really so unscientific to make this assumption, when science itself proceeds by assumptions? One of the problems socialists have, which Professor Boyd presumably will not allow, is that we are not in a position to 'prove' that socialism is better for people than capitalism. Only the establishment of socialism in practice will ever do that. However, as the professor knows perfectly well, science itself is unable to prove anything very much at all, whether it is a theory of gravity, evolution, or climate change, so it seems a little unreasonable to expect socialists to do what

scientists cannot.

As an afterthought, Professor Boyd might also be interested in a report (*New Scientist*, April 15) that the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston have been running trials of olanzapine and risperidone, anti-psychotic drugs normally given to schizophrenics, on children with an average age of 4. The same article refers to a book, *The Bipolar Child*, published in 2000, which claimed that the disorder can be detected in 2 year olds. Although the article rightly condemns the act of 'disease mongering', where drug companies persuade people they are suffering from mental health disorders simply in order to sell them drugs (most of which don't work anyway), the message is clear: mental health problems are a billion dollar business in capitalism, and now even your toddlers aren't safe.

Meanwhile, Jonathan Wolff, Professor of Philosophy at University College in London, has this to say: "Very nice article. I think we agree about a lot, except, possibly, the chances of actually achieving the socialist future you describe!" And, er, that's it. Now, were Professor Wolff to present this concise estimation of the viability of socialism to Professor Boyd, the latter might object on the grounds that this looked suspiciously like an argument based on faith rather than evidence. After all, socialists avoid the deterministic trap of claiming that socialism is inevitable, precisely because this would be a faith-based position. But it cuts both ways, and those who argue that socialism will never happen are also guilty of the same kind of faith-based determinism. We understand that the professor argues in his new book "Why Read Marx Today?" that Marx' grand theories were 'sweeping' and 'unsubstantiated' and must be abandoned, but we have no doubt that he arrived at this conclusion in the proper scientific manner and after a full and frank review of the available evidence. It is a well known fact that scientists never make sweeping unsupported statements.



Be nice, or else

The idea of cooperation is predicated on a lack of compulsion to take part. Or is it? A new study based on an investment game (*New Scientist*, April 15) which pitted a voluntary group against a group which was allowed to punish non-contributors, found that the coercive group gave better returns and attracted the most players, despite two-thirds of the subjects initially opting for the non-coercive group. The researchers claim that this result gives an important insight into the nature of cooperation, and this might have socialists worried, except for two things. One is that it is always risky to make judgments about human nature based upon present-day human behaviour. Most opinion polls, for example, would show that virtually all humans disapprove of rape and murder, which might lead one to suppose that such crimes were extremely rare and that humans are naturally peaceful. In fact these crimes are not at all rare yet we do not necessarily conclude from this that humans are naturally rapists and murderers. How people behave, therefore, in a game today does not reliably indicate how they will behave in a game at some future date.

Secondly, it is often assumed that cooperation relies simply on good will, and that it lacks any mechanism for sanctions. Socialism is not an idealised fairyland where anybody may do just as they like. If an individual's actions impact adversely on those around them, the community would not be slow to apply sanctions. The only question is, what would those sanctions be? In a cooperative community, it is quite possible that the labels 'uncooperative', or 'self-serving', or 'wasteful', or 'proprietary' would be such stigmas that people would go to considerable lengths to avoid earning them. At any rate, sanctions in socialism, were there ever a need for them, would be socially agreed and socially administered, in general proportion to the offence committed. How different from capitalism, where the theft of trinkets or pieces of paper can mean the theft of years from your life and the inhuman zoo of the prison system?

Right about Kenya

Dear Editors

The letter "Wrong on Kenya?" (March *Socialist Standard*) by Okoth Osewe can't be taken as a passing cloud.

Osewe knows very well, if he has been existing in Kenya, that no attempt at socialism has been made here. Those few who have talked about it are, like him, opportunist or capitalism's apologists. Thus his Kenya Socialist Democratic Alliance (KSDA) party is non-existent or it exists only on paper.

On the issue of the constitution, Osewe knows very well that this process was hijacked by opportunists (like him) and politicians. During the campaign for either yes or no, it was clear that these were campaigns not to either reject or support the document, but to propel some people to positions of leadership. Many politicians saw this as an opportunity to prepare themselves for next year's general election.

Why people like Osewe "pambana" (struggle) join the campaigns for the draft leaves a lot to be explained. Why the need to use so much money to campaign for the rejection of the draft?

The No campaign was led by politicians (like Osewe) who are always opposing the government. The campaign was tribalistic, hatred was obvious, propaganda for swing vote. Those who always think that they are the ones who can lead (and not be led) positioned themselves in the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). This wasn't a campaign for a constitution but for proper elections. Kenyans know better.

Socialism can only be brought about by a majority of workers organising for it.

Politicians like Osewe and many others will not, will never get anywhere near establishing socialism.

Kenyan workers know that their situation has never improved despite our constitution being amended so many times since independence. The situation isn't likely to get anywhere even with the introduction of the so-called "Bomas Draft", "Wako draft" or any other document. Reforms which have come and gone haven't made changes in our lives.

Kenya is surely ripe for socialism but people like Osewe will only manage to have beautiful socialist titles but will never manage to organise Kenyans for socialism.

I invite him to join us in our struggle for common ownership, democratic control and leaderless cause.

Only when we join hands will our desire for socialism materialise. And then socialism will rule the world, Kenya included, in the not too distant future.

PATRICK NDEGE, Nairobi, Kenya

Buyer beware

Dear Editors,

I don't always manage to remember the many downsides of capitalism and how much better things could be. But there's nothing like personally falling foul of the functioning of capitalism to bring this point home. Once such occurrence happened to me recently. I thought I'd share it with you.

I'd bought some Mr Muscle Sink and Plughole Unblocker, which I'd recently seen advertised on TV, as the sink in my room had recently become blocked. The advertisement had shown a happy man and woman gently

pouring the product down their kitchen sink. The name of the product gives rise to images of a magical little creature that pops out of the contained and does the job required, and as an imaginatively-inclined person I tend to be a bit too taken in by this kind of imagery. I had a smile on my face as I gently and slowly poured the magical product down my bedroom sink, bit by bit. It did occur to me that I could smell it, but I thought nothing of it at the time, and I was delighted to find twenty minutes later that my sink was working once again. Hurrah for Mr Muscle!!!

A couple of days later I found myself with a seriously painful sore throat. I wasn't sure exactly what it had been caused by although I had a number of ideas as possibilities. Swallowing was agony for a couple of days. After I'd gotten over the worst of it I went to the doctor to see if he had any advice. He told me that sore throats were only really caused by infections or by chemical fumes. I told him about my use of the Mr Muscle product and he said he regarded it as a very likely cause.

I thought I'd tell a few people about what had happened as a warning to them not to be as imprudent as I'd been. A friend told me that when he'd had a blocked sink he'd asked the hardware store shopkeeper what the best thing to use was, and had been told that a couple of kettles of boiling water was as good as anything. He'd tried this and it had worked perfectly. "Oh" I thought to myself, feeling a little humbled.... and my mind wandered to visions of a society in which TV advertisements were replaced by helpful practical advice, and dangerous toxic chemicals were presented for what they were.... Wow! What would that be like?

ADAM WATERHOUSE, Bristol

continued on page 18

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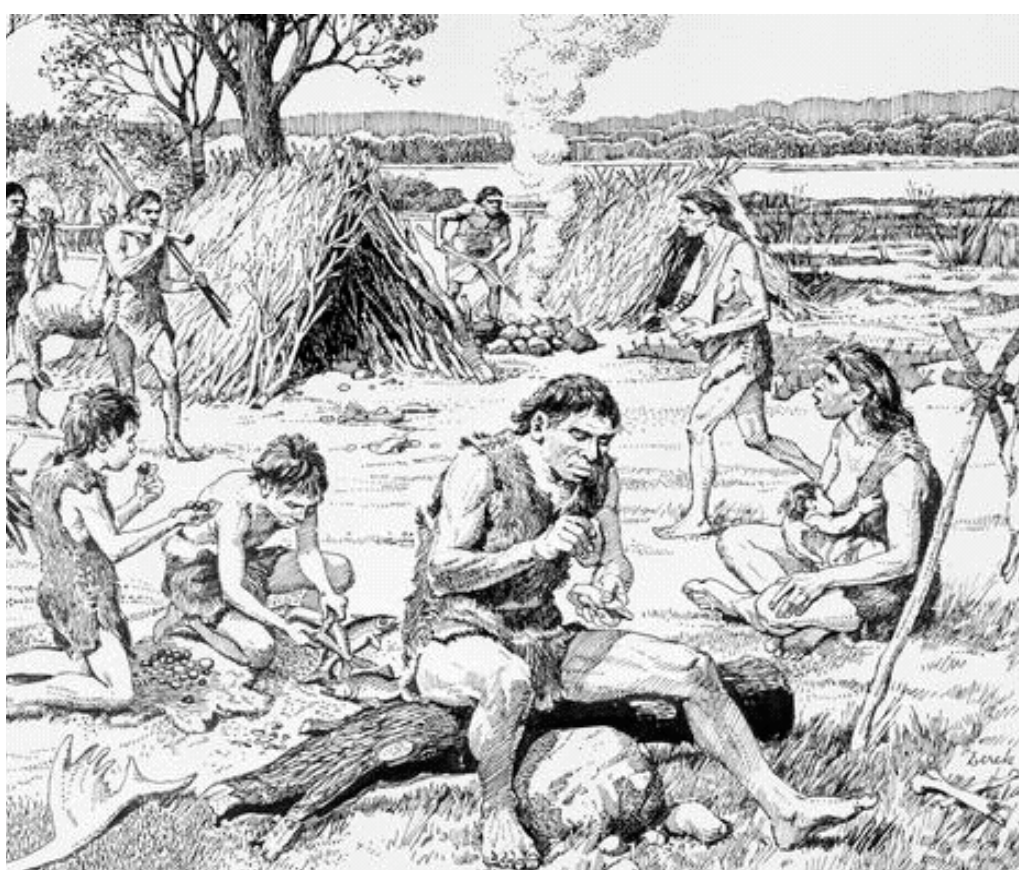
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Labour without end?

Futurologists, Alvin Toffler being the best known, have long heralded the imminent arrival of the "post-industrial society" - an arcadia in which automation has almost done away with work and our main problem will be how to cope with an excess of leisure. Indeed, labour productivity has risen steadily and at an accelerating rate throughout the last century, except for a blip in the period 1975-85, when labour productivity in the US (though not in Western Europe) fell slightly. But it is only in a rational (i.e., socialist) society, where the means of life serve the community as a whole, that higher productivity will equal less work.

It is a little recognized fact that since the 1970s working hours have tended to rise. There appear to be only two books about recent trends in working time: Juliet B. Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (BasicBooks, 1992) and Pietro Basso, *Modern Times, Ancient Hours. Working Lives in the Twenty-First Century* (translated from Italian by Giacomo Donis; Verso, 2003). Schor is concerned with the US and has a reformist orientation, while Basso attempts a Marxian analysis and focuses more on Europe. Today's young wage and salary workers work longer hours than their parents and grandparents did at the same age. There is less time not only for relaxation, hobbies, self-education, and political activity, but even for parenting, family life, sleep, socializing, and sex - much to the detriment of our quality of life and physical and emotional health.

It isn't just a matter of the number of

hours per day, week, or year. Working time has been "rationalized" as well as increased. That means greater intensity of effort and reduced opportunity for rest, social interaction, and even going to the toilet during the workday (zero "dead time," also known as the Toyota system). It means "variable" or "flexible" schedules - flexible for the boss, not the worker - with more night and weekend work to keep costly machinery in nonstop operation. Many couples now meet only to hand over the kids as they change shifts. And while some are mercilessly overworked, others are thrown out of work altogether, all in the name of profitability.

Working time has gone through some dramatic ups and downs in the course of history. Chattel slaves, of course, were forced to work long hours, though not always as long as wage slaves in the early days of capitalism, when 14 or even 16-hour days and 7-day weeks (i.e., 5,000 hours a year or more) were imposed on

children and adults alike. Medieval peasants, by contrast, had led a more leisurely life. Thanks largely to the numerous holidays of the church calendar, according to four studies of Britain in the 13th to 16th centuries they typically worked 2,000 hours a year or less. The working hours of "primitive" tribal people also tend to be relatively short. Capitalist "progress" put paid to such idleness.

In the mid-19th century working hours stood at about 3,500 hours a year (according to studies of Britain in 1840 and the US in 1850). In England the Ten Hours Bill (May 1, 1848) brought the work week down to 60 hours in the countryside (where the Sabbath was enforced) and 70 hours in the cities (where it was not). For decade after decade the working class movement struggled for the 8-hour day, but it was not achieved until after World War I. Children were finally taken out of the mines and factories and put in school. Eventually the weekend and



Work through the ages. Opposite page: "primitive" tribal people; medieval peasant. This page: 19th century mill workers; 21st century call centre

annual vacation came (though not for all). By the late 1940s the typical work year in most "developed" countries was down below 2,000 hours - just about where it had been in the middle ages.

After this the story varies somewhat from country to country. In France and Germany, where the trade unions fought for "work sharing" and the 35-hour week, the postwar decades saw a further modest decline in working hours. Paid vacations are much longer in these countries than in the US and Japan. In the US working hours were stable in the 1950s and 1960s, only to start rising again in the 1970s: the average work week increased by almost three hours between 1973 and 1997. In Britain the rise in hours appears to have levelled off in recent years. According to the UK Labour Force Survey, the proportion of employed persons usually working over 45 hours a week rose from 21 percent in 1991 to 24 percent in 1997 and then fell to 19 percent in 2003.

Many American activists make a great deal of the contrast between the US and Europe and point to Europe as a model for the US to emulate. However, the same processes are underway in Europe, and indeed throughout the world, even though they are more advanced in the US and Japan. (And in China the 11 or 12-hour day is standard.) Only certain groups of European production workers ever won the 35-hour week. For example, German metalworkers and typographers won an agreement for the 35-hour week in 1984, though it did not come into force until 1995. In exchange they had to accept intensified work regimes and "flexible" hours, including weekend work. Moreover, the employers have since

launched a largely successful counteroffensive against reduced working hours.

Why are working hours rising and what can we do about it?

Some commentators blame "consumerism" and the "work and spend

"Long hours make workers easier to control"

cycle". No doubt there are those who overwork, often in two full-time jobs, for the sake of conspicuous consumption - "to keep up with the Joneses". But the usual pattern is probably for people to work more in an effort to preserve their accustomed standard of living despite another trend of the last quarter century: the decline in real wages. Many overwork to save for their children's education or for retirement, although the overwork makes it much less likely that they'll survive to enjoy their "nest egg". And many have to overwork just to make ends meet or under pressure from their employers (e.g., compulsory overtime). Managers are especially vulnerable to such pressure: thanks to the cell phone, they can be called upon at any time and are thereby deprived of any *guaranteed* non-working time.

One important part of the explanation must be that it is cheaper for employers to hire a small number of employees to work long hours than it would be to divide up the available work

among a larger number of employees. Many labour-related costs - training, administration, fringe benefits - depend on the number of employees, not total employee-hours. So "downsizing" is always an appealing way of quickly improving a firm's profitability and competitive position. Long hours also have the advantage of making workers more dependent on a specific employer and therefore easier to control.

So could reforms change the incentive structure for both employers and employees in favour of shorter hours? Suggestions include improving the status of part-time work, abolishing higher rates for overtime, and banning compulsory overtime. Tax incentives could be devised for spreading available work more thinly. In principle such changes might have a certain effect. But if capitalists were to come under strong pressure from a reformist government in one country to shorten hours, they would surely move their assets elsewhere, as they already do to escape unwelcome regulation of other kinds.

Historical evidence does point to a clear relationship between working time and the willingness of workers and their organizations to fight for its reduction. Reduced hours have never flowed automatically from increased productivity. They have been won through long and intense struggle. And in today's world the struggle has to be waged on a global scale - not for the "right to work" but for the right to live, which includes the right to leisure. Or, to borrow the title of a classic pamphlet by Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue, the right to be lazy. ■

STEFAN

Mayday belongs to the workers. Although that means admitting that the rest of the year belongs to the capitalists it also means that we know who we are - the first step to changing our condition. That Mayday is commemorated by workers across the globe reminds us that we have a world to win and that we can win it.



Wage-labour versus capital

In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels wrote of the nub of the class struggle:

"[wage labour] creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage-labour, and which cannot increase except upon condition of begetting a new supply of wage-labour for fresh exploitation."

The basic fact is that there is no way within the system of producing goods for sale by employing waged labour - i.e. capitalism - for the system to be run for the benefit of those who must work for a living. Their labour makes more chains of capital for themselves, and capital is always ever hungrier for more and more labour to be sacrificed to it. As Marx and Engels put it:

"Capital is a collective product, and only by . . . the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion. Capital is therefore not only personal; it is a social power."

To feed capital means to extend the number of people under its sway. As capital grows so too does the number of people who must sell their ability to work, i.e. the working class.

In a recently published document, the UK's Office of National Statistics (ONS) projects that by 2020 there will be something like 32.1 million people working in the UK. That is a growth of around 6.7 percent from 2005. That is, a growth of 6.7 percent for the social power of capital over the next fifteen years. A 6.7 percent rise in the absolute size of the working class - if their figures are actually correct. This figure includes the unemployed, since the International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines the workforce as anyone either employed or actively seeking and available for work. This last qualification is important.

The latest figures for the UK from the ONS state that there are 28.8 million people in employment. This includes not

only the 3.7 million self-employed people but also the 24.9 million employees (among whom will be listed such people as Executive Directors of companies and Premiership footballers). The distinction between employee and self-employed is more fluid these days, since some people work as contractors and are nominally self-employed for tax purposes only. Likewise others whose self-employment means servicing another larger business on a regular basis. That is an employment rate of 74.5 percent of the available work age population. The overall UK population is 60 million. 20.2 percent of that employment is in the public sector, working for the state.

"That so many hours, of so many lives are given over to capital is a testimony to the social power the working class exerts in the world"

What this means, in detail, is a total of 926 million hours worked per week. This is part of a rising trend which sees the average worker in employment (full-time or part-time) spending 32.2 hours a week at their duties, not including the journey to work, thinking about work and recovering from work. So, not only are more people working - absolutely - but the people in work are working longer. The state of the class war in Britain is an increase in exploitation.

The main tool driving this exploitation onwards is the permanent pool of unemployment that has been a feature of the economy for the past thirty years.

Currently there are around 1.5 million unemployed - i.e. people available for and looking for work - in the UK. Beyond that there are, as we have covered in this journal many times, people who want to work and who are not classified as unemployed but who are also a part of this mechanism.

Across the world a similar picture can be seen. As we reported in the *March Socialist Standard*, the ILO estimates that currently there are around 2.85 billion people in work (either employed, self-employed or an unpaid family member). In 2005 there were more people in work than in the previous year, up 1.5 percent - and up 16.5 percent since 1995.

And there are currently something like 192 million human beings who are unemployed. That is a global unemployment rate of 6.3 percent - a vast reserve army of labour - meaning that the global workforce available to capital encompasses more than half the human race. Between 1995 and 2005 this global workforce grew by 16.8 percent. Taken as a figure, it represents an incredible waste of the potential skills and talents available to our species.

The situation is worse though, since being in work is little guarantee of having a decent income. 1.4 billion of that 2.8 billion workers do not earn more than the equivalent of \$2 a day for their family members. 520 million of them are taking in less than \$1 a day. Obviously, the value of a dollar varies from country to country; but the real picture is that for over one sixth of the human race work offers no prospect of reward or opportunity for themselves or their family. Grinding, pitiless, toil is their lot - a lot demanded by capital.

These toiling billions helped produce an estimated growth in world wealth of 4.3 percent in 2005. Productivity per worker has increased by an average of 2 percent per year over recent years. The average total increase in wealth (productivity plus

employment) has been 3.8 percent. Most of the growth in wealth, therefore, comes from increasing efficiency in productivity - that is more effective procedures and machinery being used, i.e. more capital being invested. However a substantial part of that increase in wealth has come from an increasing size of the working class. Much of this can be seen in the fact that 40 percent of the global workforce works in agriculture, an arduous and labour intensive branch of industry.

A simple whistle stop tour of the statistics shows clearly how little the working class is benefiting from capitalism and from the increasing wealth that we are producing. That so many hours, of so many lives are given over to capital is a testimony to the social power it exerts in the world.

The increasing growth, however, of the numbers brought under the sway of capital should give us hope - we who acknowledge ourselves as part of the working class are proclaiming our membership in the majority of the human race. As our numbers grow, as our knowledge of ourselves grows, then the prospect of building a union of that working class to emancipate itself grows also.

The total size of the workforce already exceeds 3 billion - and given that we can add in children and other dependents, we can safely affirm that over half the world shares a common experience of toil and exploitation under the direct control of capital. A clear majority who could benefit from a revolutionary change to the system and in whom the capacity to make such a change rests.

Mayday belongs to the three billion. It belongs to the workers - we have a world to win, and we can win it. ■
PIK SMEET

My road to Socialism

I first encountered the Socialist Party in a South Wales valley town. It was late 1972, and I was at a loose end politically. Years before, I had flirted with the Communist Party, to the outrage of my parents, despite my maternal grandparents having been CP supporters from the time of the Russian Revolution.

I used to read *Soviet Weekly*, and a lavishly illustrated magazine sent to me direct from Moscow, Soviet Union, full of happy smiling Russian workers on their way to exceeding the norms of the latest Five Year Plan. Nothing about Stalin having murdered thirty million or so of his own people. Nothing about the string of slave labour camps dotted around the Arctic Circle, Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, where political dissidents ended up.

What cured me of Bolshevism was the outbreak of the Hungarian uprising in 1956. My family possessed one of the few televisions in our street in those days. Here was film, direct from Budapest, of Russian tanks slaughtering Hungarian workers, whose only offence was to try to shake off Soviet tyranny. I wrote a blistering letter to *Soviet Weekly* but, of course, I never got a reply. One of the maxims of capitalist society is obviously 'when faced with the truth, ignore it.'

For the next sixteen years, except for one brief episode, I was more or less in the political wilderness. My father was a lifelong member of the NUM and its local predecessor, the South Wales Miners' Federation, the "Fed" whose subs had to be paid in secret, lest you ended up on the colliery owner's blacklist, then being unable to get a job in any colliery in the valley. Dad was an admirer of Aneurin Bevan, the Labour Health Minister, a former miner himself, and MP for a local constituency, Ebbw Vale. Bevan's stock went even higher in our house when he described the Conservatives as "lower

than vermin".

The watershed came in 1964. For the first time since 1951 a Labour government was elected. But it didn't turn out to be the promised land that some had thought. Far from it. Labour proved itself incapable of solving the intractable issues of capitalism, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, warfare and a host of other working class problems too.

Somewhere between 1964 and 1972, still looking for an alternative to capitalism, I joined Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalist party. Out of the frying pan into the fire! Some forty years later there are only one or two aspects of their policies I can recollect. They regarded themselves as a socialist party, by which they meant state capitalism, and they had the curious belief that the little countries of Europe were all doing better than the larger ones, as if capitalism was particularly considerate in this respect. Of course, it was twaddle. What Plaid didn't say was that in an independent Wales, the situation of the worker would be no different from in a larger political unit, i.e. they would have only their ability to work to sell, and so would be shut out from the wealth of society, which would be appropriated by a Welsh capitalist class. For the worker, nationalism is a total waste of time.

And so to 1972. On a November day I picked up a copy of the *Socialist Standard* in the local library. It came like a political thunderbolt. Here were ideas I had never encountered before. Free access to the wealth of society. Production for use. The workers have no country. Abolition of money. No more governments, no more states, no more frontiers, no armies, no war.

For the first time in my life, I felt politically free. ■

GREENIE



Cooking the Books (1)

Money for Nothing

Towards the end of last year Roger Bootle, one of the "wise men" who advised Tory Chancellor Nigel Lawson, launched a new edition of his

book with this title. According to an interview by Heather Stewart,

"The painful lesson he encourages the reader to learn is that it's an illusion to think we can have 'money for nothing' simply by buying and selling shares - or houses - from each other. Day-trading in equities, or dashing up the property ladder, has winners and losers - it doesn't make society, or the world, richer 'any more than taking in each other's washing'" (October, 9 October).

A perhaps unintended admission that nothing that goes on in the City or in estate agents' offices results in any increase in wealth, but is rather a drain on resources.

Wealth is something that satisfies some human want, real or imaginary. Some wealth is provided free by nature such as the air we breathe or the rays of the sun, but new wealth can only be produced in one way: by human beings applying their mental and physical energies to materials that originally came

from nature, these days using machinery and equipment that had themselves been previously fashioned by human labour from materials from nature.

That new wealth can only result from the application of human labour was once so obvious that nobody challenged it until less than 150 years ago. It was only when the anti-capitalist implications of this obvious fact were realised by the ideological defenders of capitalism that they began to concoct another theory as to how wealth was produced.

One of the first to attack the labour theory of wealth production was the English academic, W. H. Mallock (1849-1923). He introduced a new "factor of production" in addition to the traditional three of Land (a gift of Nature), Labour and Capital (the product of Land and Labour): Entrepreneurship. According to him, without this fourth factor nothing would get produced as it was the entrepreneur who alone could bring the other three together; without entrepreneurs no wealth would be produced. So, it was they would be entitled to be called "the wealth producers".

Naturally, entrepreneurs were delighted at this new advance in economic "understanding" and today that there are four "factors of production" is incorporated in all economics textbooks. For instance, a typical such book (in the occurrence, Economics by Ralph T. Byrns and Gerald W. Stone) states

that "economists conventionally refer to four broad categories of resources: land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship" explaining:

"Entrepreneurs provide a special type of human resource; they combine labour, natural resources and capital to produce goods and services while incurring risk in their quest for profits. After paying wages, rent and interest for the use of other resources, entrepreneurs keep any money left over from their sales revenue. An entrepreneur's profit is a reward for organizing production, bearing business risks, and introducing innovations that improve the quality of life".

Even a GCSE level economics student should be able to see the fallacy in this (though they would be ill-advised to point it out if they want to pass their exam). Organising production, and introducing innovations, is clearly Labour, the exercise of mainly mental energy, and these days is largely done by hired, if highly trained and highly paid, wage workers no different in principle from the other workers hired by the capitalist enterprise concerned.

Profit is not a "reward" for anything. It is a claim on wealth arising from the fact that the means and instruments of production used to produce new wealth are private property. In other words, it's a non-work, property income and as such a prime example of "money for nothing" that Roger Booth seems to have overlooked.

Hours, wages and profits



The struggle to reduce the length of the working day is the embodiment of class struggle in capitalism. Although class struggle in pre-capitalist society took on different forms, class conflict between those who monopolised the means of producing wealth and those who laboured to produce surplus product was a constant feature. In these societies the producers were openly compelled not only to provide the means of their own subsistence but also that of the owner of the means of production. This expropriated labour took on different appearances in different societies. In slave society the slave master owned the slave's entire day and maintained the slave in much the same way as the prudent factory owner might look after his machinery. In feudal society the serf was tied to plots of land, which were cultivated in return for unpaid work or surplus product.

Capitalism turned human labour power into a commodity - something bought and sold. As feudalism gave way to the wage labour of early capitalism, the surplus product so obvious in feudal society became hidden by the apparent freedom of the workers to sell their labour power to an employer who would pay the highest wages. But while this arrangement has the appearance of a 'fair day's work for a fair day's pay' it actually hides worker exploitation that is the source of alienation.

When capitalists buy a worker's labour they buy the worker's capacity to work for a full day. Wages are set, however, like every other commodity, by the value of labour-power needed to reproduce them, which in the case of labour is the value of food, clothing, etc. needed to keep the worker in a fit condition to work. But the value of 'labour power' is different from the value created by the worker's labour and this difference, called surplus value, belongs to the capitalist.

The working day under capitalism therefore divides into two parts; 'necessary labour' when the workers actually earn what they are paid in wages, and 'surplus labour' which is the time spent producing 'surplus value' for the capitalist employer. Naturally, it is in the interest of the worker to earn a wage sufficient to purchase the necessities of life in the shortest possible time. Conversely, once the worker's wages have been paid, it is in the interest of the employer, the purchaser of labour power, to make the worker work as long as possible. Accordingly, in early capitalist society the owner always looked to expand working hours and keep the worker working to the limits of human endurance.

Where the length of the working day is reduced the natural tendency of the capitalist is to increase the intensity of the working day. The capitalists endeavour to get more work from the workers in order to maintain or increase the level of 'surplus value' which is the source of their profit. Accordingly, in many cases the reduction in working hours over the last 200 years has been achieved by intensifying work and making the employee work harder to earn their wage.

Factory Laws

The factory system transformed the way people worked. Under a system of wage labour workers were forced to submit to the regimentation of factory life where the division of labour and pace of work were

set by power-driven machinery with fixed hours, six days a week. Improvements in machinery encouraged the substitution of women and children for men to reduce the price of labour power, and by 1816 a working day of 16 or 18 hours, regardless of age or gender, was common in conditions that were cramped, airless, deafening and dangerous. Parliament, representing the interests of the ruling class, was naturally attached to the doctrines of a laissez-faire political economy where social problems were instinctively ignored.

As early as 1810, Robert Owen, the philanthropist industrialist, raised the demand for a ten-hour working day, which was instituted on his enterprise at New Lanark. By 1817 he was calling for an eight-hour day under the slogan 'Eight hours labour, Eight hours recreation, Eight hours rest.' His demands came to nothing and it wasn't until the 1830s and 1840s that a movement for shorter working hours developed into agitation for the ten-hour working day for children who were often taken by mill owners from parish workhouses in batches and treated as slave labour. The *short time movement* coalesced around the Leeds Tory evangelical, Richard Oastler, who headed the Yorkshire Factory Movement that organised public meetings and mass marches, including that in York on Easter Sunday 1832. It also delivered a petition to parliament where another evangelical, Michael Sadler, gathered parliamentary support for the reduction of child working hours.

The movement faced bitter opposition. Radicals, many of them factory owners, citing the laissez-faire doctrines of Jeremy Bentham, justified opposition to a reduction in the working day by asserting that state intervention was inappropriate because it interfered with the natural workings of the market. Mill owners were hostile to the *Ten Hour Movement* because a shorter working day for children would inevitably result in a restriction on adult working hours. Cheap child labour, they argued, maintained adult workers' productivity and if working hours were restricted it would reduce profits and make it uneconomic to keep the workplace open beyond 10 hours simply to employ adult labour. As well as reducing profits a reduction in working hours would lead to unemployment, they claimed, because better working conditions and shorter working hours would raise production costs and make goods less competitive on foreign markets.

This reasoning was supported by eminent economists, notably Nassau Senior, the Oxford professor of Political Economy, who made the claim, ridiculed by Marx (and by what happened when working hours were reduced), that the entire profit from industry was generated in the last hour's work each day and therefore any reduction in the working day would eliminate profit altogether. Other apologists for child exploitation claimed that the employment of child labour for long hours was acceptable because it had occurred in agriculture for centuries and even suggested that long working hours occupied otherwise idle children and kept them from becoming a social nuisance. Too much leisure time for the poor was seen as a dangerous and undesirable development.

Set against this background it is hardly surprising that early legislation to restrict child labour, including the Factory Acts of 1819, 1831 and 1833, was weak and

ineffective. Despite the commitment in the Factory Act of 1833 (piloted by Lord Ashley, later Earl of Shaftesbury) to reducing child working hours to 8 hours for 9-13 year-olds and 12 hours for young people of 14-18, it was never effectively enforced and applied only to cotton mills. The Act appointed four inspectors to supervise the Act but mill owners responded



by introducing the 'relay system' of child labour so that factories could still remain open from 5.30am to 8.30pm. The 1833 Act was also passed at the expense of the short-time movement that advocated shorter working hours for all workers.

Further legislation followed but it wasn't until 1847 that the reformer and Chartist sympathiser John Fielden



introduced a parliamentary bill to limit the working day to ten hours for all women and young persons up to the age of 18. It was accompanied by massive demonstrations and marches throughout the north of England and passed through parliament without amendment. This Act was a consequence of an alliance between the Chartist movement and the representatives of the landed aristocracy, the Tories, against the rising industrial bourgeoisie, who in 1846 had succeeded in the repeal of the Corn Laws. Although the textile industry was suffering a trade depression and most factories were already on a ten-hour day, manufacturers hindered the implementation of the 1847 Act by cutting wages in order to encourage opposition to the legislation on the grounds that workers needed to work the longer hours.

Three years later, the Factory Act of 1850 reduced factory opening to 12 hours each day, with the provision that factories must close at 2pm on a Saturday. The Act also reduced the working day for women and young persons to ten and a half hours, which in practice meant that male working hours also started to be restricted. As the reduction in working hours was introduced, the intensity of work increased, which meant that in many cases the anticipated fall in production did not occur and output actually increased. But the regulations only applied to textile mills and the next struggle was to

extending the coverage of the Act across industry, finally achieved in 1867.

In the next decade, the 1874 Factory Act reduced the working day to ten hours for women and young persons. Almost immediately agitation for the *Nine Hours Movement* began and won a reduction of hours in the engineering and building industries. Trade Unions, which received full legal recognition in 1876, joined the struggle for a reduction in working hours through collective bargaining and strikes, especially in the north east of England. By the 1880s the movement began to gather around the demand for an eight-hour day.

Reversal of improvements

But the defeat of the 'New Unionism' (the organisation of the unskilled) in the 1890s gave new leverage to the employers and further reductions in working hours were halted and sometimes reversed. In 1906 the factory working week still averaged 54 hours and by the 1920s had only reduced to 47 hours. Not until the late 1960s did a 40-hour working week become the accepted standard. The 8-hour day was accompanied by a real increase in holidays and pensions, achieved largely, however, by increasing the intensity of work.

Since the 1970s the struggle to reduce working hours has disappeared and improvements in working conditions have gradually been reversed. The weakening of national constraints on the movement of capital from country to country has meant that investment focuses on short-term profit through share prices rather than on long-term dividends. This has increased pressure on employers to make more profit and intensify the working conditions of their employees. Jobs have similarly moved from country to country in search of lower costs and new technologies begun to make it cheaper to invest in machines instead of people.

The security of life-long employment has been abandoned and replaced by 'short term relationships,' where workers are expected to periodically migrate from job to job and undergo regularly retraining. The correlation between economic growth and improving social welfare has been cut and part-time working, which often denies bargaining power or employment benefits, has been expanded. Part-time working has also released capitalism from the need to provide a living wage, forcing working people to rely on multiple incomes from a variety of jobs. Unpaid overtime has become widespread and pensions and the retirement age are under attack.

In capitalism, struggle to defend and where possible improve working conditions, as generations of workers did to reduce the length of the working day, is important. But no amount of reform will eliminate the irreconcilable clash of interest between the capitalist and the working class, even if the working day were to reduce to an absolute minimum. It is only in a society of common ownership where production is for use not profit and where exchange, labour as a commodity and the wages system have been abolished that work will become a creative and rewarding experience. In such a society the distinction between work and leisure will disappear and because work will be voluntary, freed from the alienation of wage labour, the concept of working hours will cease to have meaning. ■

STEVE TROTT



Class struggles in France

Doubtless many readers of the Socialist Standard will already know that the strikes and demonstrations in France last month had to do with the new work contracts which the de Villepin government introduced into the legislative process over three months ago. Some of this legislation is already on the statute books: the so-called Contrat Nouvelle Embauche (New Hiring Contract), for example, already covers more than 300,000 hirings in small enterprises. It was only over the infamous Contrat Première Embauche (First Hiring Contract) that President Chirac has back-pedalled in the face of massive demonstrations. This ultra-liberal legislation was aimed at establishing more flexibility into what is often considered to be a highly protective and rigid system of employment relations in France. This legislation was justified in terms of the high levels of unemployment experienced by young people, the recent riots in France being presented as a wake-up call heard only by right-wing politicians but ignored by the more consensual politicians on the left. French workers were being asked to believe that the scrapping of legal protection against arbitrary hiring and firing was in their own interest.

Both the CNE and the CPE established the principle of abrupt firings with little or no legal protection for workers during a two-year trial period. The CNE affects workers in small enterprises and can be applied to workers of any age whilst the CPE was aimed at young workers up to 26 years of age. Once the two-year period is up (if it ever is), the happy workers will be offered permanent contracts, so everything will turn out well, in theory. Other legal dispositions packaged under the misleading term 'law of equal opportunities' include the possibility of hiring apprentices at

14 years of age and the possibility of inducing 15-year-olds to work at night. This partial return to nineteenth-century practices, we are told, would loosen up hiring practices and significantly reduce the high levels of unemployment recorded in the statistics produced by governmental agencies. The cost, of course, will be a significant increase in the insecurity experienced by workers who risk being laid off at any moment. This means that they will soon be unable to find decent accommodation, accumulate pension rights or simply plan for the future in such a way as to constitute normal family life. The contrast with the existing legislation centred on the permanent contract with built-in pension provision and a range of social benefits could not be sharper.

Big Lie

The difficulty of getting workers to swallow the big lie that job insecurity is a good thing being obvious, the government resorted to an ideological broadside aimed at



setting one category of worker against another. The students who sparked off the movement against the CPE have been presented as privileged middle-class youth relatively unconcerned with the dire situation faced by immigrants in the run-down sink estates of the suburbs. The de Villepin government asked us to believe that these contracts were designed specifically to help a population of workers which has been consigned to suburban dumping grounds for more than three decades. (The fact that de Villepin waited for more than three weeks of demonstrations before he discovered this ideological fig-leaf shows how clumsy the public relations job has been.) Another strategy was to present French workers as dyed-in-the-wool conservatives defending a status quo made irrelevant by globalisation, the highly indebted nature of the French state and the need to remain in the vanguard of the technological revolution.

Inevitably, the 'phenomenal success' of Tony Blair's 'Third Way' in reducing the level of unemployment to a mere 5 percent was wheeled out as a counter-example to French timidity, notwithstanding the fact that the definition of unemployment in Britain has been changed over 20 times since the 1970s in order to disguise the real situation. Workers in Britain are well aware that the

unemployment and insecurity which they see all around them does not find its way into the official statistics. The deregulation of the labour market in Great Britain over the last two decades has resulted in a doubling in recorded levels of official poverty and a new category of working poor has emerged to replace the indemnified unemployed. The recent mass strike of over 1.5 million public sector workers clearly shows that workers in Britain are by no means living in a neo-liberal cornucopia.

This said, it's true that many French workers have enjoyed a level of protection denied to many new entrants into the labour market, young workers and immigrants. The permanent work contract provides access to a range of social benefits and protections which are envied by those workers who hop from one short-term contract to another. The government obviously hoped that this would constitute a source of resentment and jealousy which could be exploited. It's true that workers on permanent contracts are difficult to fire, given that breaking a contract in these cases is very expensive, compensation being proportional to the number of years worked. But this tactic has backfired: even short-term contracts are better than the almost total absence of legal guarantees contained in the CPE and CNE. Besides, over half a million 'baby boom' workers are now leaving the labour force every year heading for retirement, so the level of youth unemployment is bound to fall. The question is whether or not these relatively secure jobs will remain on offer to the new entrants.

The hard fact is that it's quite clear that in the long run greater job insecurity is on the cards for everyone. Long term permanent jobs - jobs for life - are getting

scarcer and even the public sector has been



placed on a slimfast diet. The bosses want workers who can be hired and fired in reaction to sudden and unexpected changes in demand in markets where every sale counts. Industrial jobs have been disappearing fast to be replaced by service sector jobs which are notoriously badly-paid and insecure. These trends do not respect political frontiers. The left-wing government under Lionel Jospin imposed a shorter working week in exchange for greater flexibility in working patterns, production workers being placed on call for work during the weekends or in the evenings to meet sudden fluctuations in demand with disastrous consequences for family life. Real wage levels are stagnant or falling. Pension rights have been reduced. A capitalism which attempted to adjust fluctuations in world demand by modifying monetary exchange rates in accordance with the rules laid down by the International Monetary Fund has been replaced by a highly volatile monetary system in which adjustments are made by hiring and firing production workers. The new generation of workers is facing a future where they will be considered simply as commodities, labour power, to be bought and sold in line with demand, all human safeguards having been removed.

The movement

The movement against the new employment legislation was initiated by students at the universities of Poitiers and Rennes. Despite superficial resemblances, these students do not have the same profile as the relatively privileged students who took to the barricades in May 1968. Nowadays university students in France tend to come from the more threatened sections of that section of the working class known as "the middle-class". Elite students usually go to the so-called 'Grandes ecoles' where they are guaranteed access to a world-class education, contacts into the upper-reaches of the civil service and entry into well-paid jobs in multinational corporations. They are even paid a salary whilst they study. By way of contrast, students in the universities tend to finance their studies by doing Mac-jobs, grants being rare and piss-poor. About 40 percent of students drop out in the first couple of years, disgusted by the ramshackle organisation of the faculties and courses given by a small army of hourly-paid teachers who are already living in the state of insecurity that the young are fighting against. Those who do succeed in this often unimaginative system are usually rewarded by a succession of badly-paid or even unpaid training courses, quite rightly presented as an apprenticeship into the real world of work (exploitation).

It is this threatened section of the so-called "middle-class" which has finally come out in open revolt against the absence of perspectives which capitalism has been trying

to get them to accept. What has surprised many commentators has been the brilliant organisation and determination of students formerly presented as apathetic and passive by their elders. Rather than seeking the help of professional politicians and full-time student unionists, the students set up their own system of co-ordination with elected delegates and they undertook mammoth debates on the issues involved in the new legislation. (Some of the debates lasted 72 hours.) Taking advantage of the new forms of communication offered by internet and high-speed trains they improvised a nationwide movement which quickly led to the closure of 60 of the 90-odd universities in France and the partial closure of dozens of high schools. The various attempts made to establish links with production workers have resulted in a spectacular leap forward in political awareness, workers suffering from poverty wages and unemployment having been invited to speak at student assemblies. Safety inspectors, experts on employment problems and workers in jobcentres have been given a chance to talk of their experience. Outreach into the high schools in the run-down suburbs resulted in the presence of thousands of black and Arab youths in the demonstrations, offering an apprenticeship in peaceful political agitation to youngsters subject to social stigma and popular prejudice.

Anyway, it was fun seeing the conservative government caught with its pants down. De Villepin's authoritarian imposition of the new legislation via the undemocratic procedure of decrees failed to impress the masses. His popularity, never very great, is now in free fall and his political career is seriously compromised. Nobody ever elected him anyway. Chirac, a burnt-out old wheeler-dealer elected faute de mieux in a second round play-off with Le Pen, promulgated the CPE law while at the same time promising to amend it in such a way as to remove some of the more contentious aspects. In the end he had to withdraw it. The short-term winner has been Chirac's sworn enemy and would-be successor, the insanely ambitious Sarkozy. As you can imagine, the cartoonists had a field day and the only people not laughing are the leaders of the French 'socialist' party who are increasingly filling the vacuum in their political programme with precisely those Blairite nostrums that the young are refusing.

The moment the trade union movement was reluctant to get engaged in a full-blown conflict with the government. Doubtless this has something to do with the fiasco of its mobilisation to counter the government's pension 'reforms' three years ago but it could also reflect the fact that the students have done a good job in discrediting the prime minister and dividing the government. However, the unions could have shown a little bit more muscle. Although the CPE has been withdrawn, the employers seem very attached to the CNE which constitutes a real threat to workers and, it may be added, to the ability of unions to organise workers. Indeed, the

MEDEF, the bosses' union, wants to generalise the CNE to all sectors and age-groups.

The students, future workers, tried to expand their movement to incorporate all the various categories of workers but they clearly failed to generalize their demands adequately. Vague slogans against the precarious society more often than not failed to reach those workers who have been living from hand to mouth for some time. The reason for this is fairly simple: the general outlook of many of the poorer workers is constrained by the absence of qualifications and the urgent need to find cash. By staying largely at the level of a simple defence of their own immediate interests (in a movement which had all the strengths and weaknesses of spontaneity) the students were confronted by the rapid demobilisation of the movement as the examination season looms into sight. The movement was, after all, a student one albeit with a considerable amount of grass-roots support from the trade unions. The suspicion that the aim of the movement was simply that of defending the value of academic qualifications - what distinguishes the students from the unskilled workers - is, in this sense, inescapable. The unions, for their part, were only too glad to keep the movement within the narrow bounds of the defence of wages and conditions, notwithstanding the considerable level of economic insecurity which already exists. On the other hand there were many hopeful signs that the students were getting to grips with a more general malaise and that the movement was groping towards a wider perspective. It is at this point that the absence of a deeper understanding of what capitalism implies and of the need for a socialist movement embracing all categories of wage-earner was at its most glaring.

A Personal Note

I am not alone in having been taken completely by surprise by the students' movement. The rapidity of its expansion and its extension to other categories in the population was nothing short of incredible. After the heavy and depressing riots of November with their mindless violence and undercurrent of racial tension, it has been comforting to see an outburst of political activity clearly directed against the poverty and loneliness of capitalist society. Despite the images shown on television, the massive demonstrations were on the whole good-natured and peaceful. The mixing together of young and old, and absence of sectarian politics, and the generally high level of debate was particularly encouraging. Although the movement has not taken a socialist direction, there is clearly a lot of discontent out there seeking a political expression and there does seem to be something of a resumption of the class struggle in Europe as a whole. ■

MALCOM MANSFIELD



Freud and Marx: do they mix?



From left: Freud, Marcuse, Reich, and Fromm

Freud was born 150 years ago this month. Here we look at those who have tried to combine his theories with those of Marx.

Freud, who was an atheist and regarded himself as a scientific materialist, put forward a theory to explain irrational behaviour. As a doctor specialising in mental disorders and a pioneer in this field, he was quite entitled to put forward the hypothesis that mental disorders were generally connected with sexual repression in early childhood. But he was equally required to propose a mechanism as to how this could come about. His suggested materialist explanation was that there existed in human beings a special form of instinctual energy—sexual energy—to which he gave the name "libido". That gave other scientists something to go on, something to look for in the physiology of human beings.

The trouble is that no such instinctual sexual energy has ever been found. Freud has, however, been proved right that what happens in early childhood is of crucial importance for the development of the adult personality. Other scientists have confirmed that this is the period of fairly rapid learning. But there is no reason to suppose that this is all about sex. Sexual preferences and orientations will be just one amongst many other things that will be learned during this period.

It is also true that people have been taught (more in the past than today) irrational ideas and attitudes about sex and this has had a harmful effect on their adult sex life and, in extreme cases, on their mental health. Freud's critics don't deny this but say he was wrong to seek to reduce everything to the expression or repression or diversion of some instinctual sexual energy.

Instinctual energy?

Wilhelm Reich, like Freud, was a medical doctor. At first he had been interested in the physiology of sex but then, under Freud's influence, became interested in its psychology as well. But he always retained an interest in physiology and was the one of Freud's followers who took the most seriously Freud's hypothesis that there existed a material energy form called "libido" or "instinctual sexual energy" and set about trying to find it.

His break with Freud did not come over this, but over politics. Freud was an ordinary defender of liberal capitalism and wanted to keep his theories as essentially a clinical cure for certain forms of mental illness. Reich didn't agree. He felt that a free society could exist if people in general were taught to take a rational attitude to sex. This

led him in 1927 to join the Communist Party, from which he was to be expelled in 1933.

Reich offered an explanation as to why fascism had developed: sexual repression in early childhood. According to him, the particular form of sexual repression and family life practised in pre-Nazi Germany led to people, including workers, coming to have an authoritarian personality which inclined them to follow and be dependent on leaders, who represented the patriarchal father-figure they had been brought up to believe in and which, as a result, they had a psychological need for.

Reich's theory didn't have much impact at the time but it was revived in the 1960s and 70s when his *The Sexual Revolution* and *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* were hugely popular, being reprinted many times and translated into many languages. The combination of Marxism and sexual liberation caught the mood of the time. His argument in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* as to why people had supported fascism was transferred virtually unchanged to explain why people supported capitalism; it was as if its title had been "the mass psychology of capitalism". In this way sexual liberation came to be seen as being intrinsically anti-capitalist.

There is nothing wrong with sexual liberation but it stands on its own and doesn't need Reich's psychological theories to justify it. Since the 60s and 70s the so-called sexual revolution has proceeded. The patriarchal family is not half so patriarchal as it used to be and is not so widespread either—yet capitalism is as solidly supported by the majority of people as it ever was. Which in itself undermines theories based on Reich as to why workers support capitalism.

In 1939 Reich claimed to have found Freud's posited instinctual sexual energy, calling it "orgone". After that, he went completely haywire, claiming that it came from outer space and could cure cancer. As a result of refusing to stop selling "orgone boxes" to cure cancer, he was jailed for contempt of court and in fact died in the hospital wing of a prison in 1957.

This pathetic end should not disguise the fact that he was merely trying to prove what was at the basis of Freud's theories: that there was such a thing as sexual energy. He failed, and so has everybody else. These days not even most Freudians defend the existence of sexual energy in the sense Freud understood it, as an instinctual bodily energy that could be repressed or diverted into other forms of bodily energy.

Philosophical speculations

Although Freud did believe that ultimately a materialist basis for mental states would be

found—that the nature of the "sexual energy" he posited would eventually be uncovered—he himself never claimed it had been or was anywhere near to being discovered. This didn't prevent him from continuing to speculate on the basis that it did exist. Indeed, from one point of view, Freud can be better seen as a speculative philosopher than as a practising scientist, at least in his later years. The trouble was that he came up with speculative theories which could neither be proved nor disproved.

For instance, he posited a "life instinct" and then, later, a "death instinct". He talked about a "pleasure principle" and a "reality principle". But how could the existence of such "instincts" and "principles" be proved? Some (most, in fact) of his followers—Reich for instance—denied that there was such a thing as a "death instinct". So, Freud said there was; Reich said there wasn't. But how to prove which one was right? You can't. There's no way of doing so.

One philosopher who took up Freud's philosophical speculations was Herbert Marcuse. He started from a book written by Freud in 1930, *Civilisation and Its Discontents*. This is one of the most anti-socialist books ever written since it provides a pseudo-scientific justification for the so-called "human nature" objection to socialism. Freud was quite explicit about this:

"(. . .) men are not gentle creatures, who want to be loved, who at most defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him".

According to Freud, human civilisation is based, and has to be based, on the repression of the basic "sexual" or "instinctual" energy he believed humans to have. What happened, in Freud's view, was that this repressed sexual energy was diverted into the work which had to be engaged in to produce the things humans needed to survive and build up the material side of civilisation. This speculation that the energy for work comes from diverted sexual energy is baseless. We know where we get this energy from—the food we eat, which is a form of chemical energy which the body converts into potential mechanical energy.

Without such sexual repression, Freud taught, we would all behave like babies do in the first year or so of their life seeking

immediate gratification, which in Freud's mind meant sexual gratification. But more, by this time Freud had introduced a "death instinct" into his speculative philosophy. So, without sexual repression, human society would collapse into an orgy of sex and violence.

Marcuse—who was a philosopher and not a scientific researcher—set out to show, in his *Eros and Civilisation* (1955), that Freudian theories did not necessarily rule out a free, non-repressive society. He accepted Freud's speculation that civilisation had originally been based on a necessary sexual repression, but added two riders: (1) that only a part of this had come from the conditions of scarcity which obliged humans to work, another part came from living in class-divided societies where ruling classes imposed an extra repression over and above that arising from natural scarcity, and (2) that, with the coming of automation and the like, scarcity had now been conquered. This being so, sexual repression—that imposed by natural conditions as well as that imposed by class-divided society—was no longer necessary. Civilisation need no longer be based on sexual repression. A free, non-repressive society was possible. Freud and socialism could be reconciled.

Marcuse's explanation as to why people accepted capitalism was that they had been psychologically manipulated into wanting it. In other words, that their basic "instincts" had been remoulded so as to fit in with capitalist society. In so doing he presented himself with a dilemma: if this was really the case, how could such people ever come to want to get rid of capitalism?

Community life

Erich Fromm tried to combine Freud's ideas with those of Marx in a quite different way. Whereas Freud (and Reich and Marcuse) saw the mind as something that could be explained in terms of the individual's instinctual biological development, Fromm said that the mind was a social phenomenon. Thus, while Freud explained mental illness in terms of the failure of an individual to develop normally through the various stages

of sexual development which his theory posited, Fromm (a medical doctor and practising psychiatrist himself) explained mental illness in terms of the failure of the individual to relate properly with other individuals. For him, not only the mind but (most) mental illnesses were social.

This might even be said to amount to the complete overthrow of the Freudian system. Fromm himself didn't go that far. He still believed in psychoanalysis as a therapy and he still thought in terms of a "life instinct" and a "death instinct". In his book *The Sane Society* (which also appeared in 1955) he wrote the following (which led orthodox Freudians to say that he wasn't really a Freudian at all):

"Freud, searching for the basic force which motivates human passions and desires, believed he had found it in the libido. But powerful as the sexual drive and its derivations are, they are by no means the most powerful forces within man and their frustration is not the cause of mental disturbances. The most powerful forces motivating man's behaviour stems from the conditions of his existence, the 'human situation'" (chapter 3).

By "the conditions of the human situation" Fromm meant that humans are the only animal species whose individual members have an awareness of themselves as separate individuals, have "self consciousness". This gives us a sense of individuality and freedom, says Fromm, but at the same time a sense of aloneness. According to him, the driving force behind human behaviour is not, as Freud claimed, the search for pleasure which was ultimately sexual, but the desire to overcome this sense of aloneness, the desire to feel part of a greater whole, the desire to be liked and accepted by other human beings.

This is a theory of human nature. In the argument about human nature that has gone on amongst socialists—is it human nature to be completely adaptable or are there conditions that humans couldn't adapt to because it would be contrary to their nature?—Fromm comes down in favour of the second view. Humans are social animals,

and we need each other not only practically so as to collectively produce the material things we need to live but also psychologically—we need to feel part of a group, of a community. From which it follows that any society which does not satisfy this psychological need, or which actively works to prevent it being satisfied, is incompatible with human nature.

The basic theme of Fromm's *The Sane Society* is that capitalism, because it encourages competition between individuals, pitting them against each other in a rat race for power, privilege and prestige, is a society that is incompatible with human nature. It is an "insane society", a "sick society". Only a society based on co-operation and community is a sane society as one which properly meets the psychological needs of human beings for a sense of belonging; not just a sense of belonging but a state of actually belonging to a real community.

The existence of false communities—such as those provided by racism, nationalism and religion—would seem to confirm Fromm's theory that there is a human need to be part of a community with other human beings and that capitalism is against "human nature" because it denies, and works against, this basic need. Although capitalism continually seeks to reduce us to isolated social atoms who only collide in the marketplace as buyers and sellers, the basic human need for community still expresses itself even if in distorted and perverted forms.

If true, this is the answer to the dilemma that Reich and Marcuse had got themselves into with their theory that capitalism had learned how to manipulate what they regarded as the driving force behind human behaviour—Freud's imaginary "sexual energy"—so as to create people whose very personality and character structure has been moulded for life under capitalism. It would mean that there was still hope for socialism. Capitalism can try to suppress the human need for co-operation and community but will never be able to succeed. ■

ADAM BUICK



Cooking the Books (2)

Footballers' Wages

When last December Richard Caborn, the Minister for Sport, suggested that limits should be placed on the income of professional

footballers, Arsène Wenger, the Arsenal manager, said that he wouldn't be against a limit on all incomes but would be against applying this just to footballers:

"You can't say that a sportsman should have a limited amount of income but a banker should get a £15 million bonus as he's a stockbroker who makes a lot of money . . . We live in a world where the richest 50 people own 48 per cent of the riches of the whole earth. But do we just limit the salaries of footballers who normally come out of poor backgrounds - and you normally need special qualities to be a strong footballer?" (Times, 31 December).

It was a fair debating point, but economics is not about who is the most deserving of a high income. Bankers,

stockbrokers and other fat cats who award themselves huge bonuses are indeed useless parasites. Because they control a capitalist business they are able to siphon off, at the expense of other shareholders, a part of the profits for their own personal benefit in the form of a bloated "salary".

Footballers at least start from the same position as the rest of us: not owning any wealth from which to obtain an unearned income, to obtain what they need to live they have to go out on to the labour market and offer their mental and physical energies for sale. Most professional footballers, working for clubs in the lower divisions or for non-league clubs, never earn anything more than the average worker.

But some, those who play for the first teams of clubs (rather, businesses) in the Premier League, are paid fabulous amounts of money, by working class (if not capitalist class) standards. What is their income? Is it wages? Not really. It's more like rent. Rent is paid whenever there is a natural monopoly in something that cannot be increased, normally land, mineral deposits, waterfalls and other natural features that can be employed in production. The rent of land and natural resources is essentially fixed by

the paying demand for it. The higher the demand, the higher the rent.

As Arsène Wenger pointed out, "you normally need special qualities to be a strong footballer". It is these "special qualities" - which are a sort of natural resource that cannot be increased - that enable the best footballers to command so high an income, but as rent rather than as the price for the mere sale of their labour power. Their income is so high because the demand for their talents is so high, Premier League football being Big Business with, thanks to television, a huge market.

Wenger was right to draw attention to the fact that we live in a world of inequality. That is a natural consequence of the workings of capitalism. Socialists want a world of equality, but this is not one where everybody has an equal income. On the contrary, it would be a world where nobody had a monetary income, large, small or equal, but where everybody would have an equal say in the way things are run and an equal right to satisfy their needs. And one in which, while there would still be (amateur) footballers, there'd be no bankers or stockbrokers.

"Better I die of radiation than my children of hunger..."

In the village of Orlovka, in the Chui region of Kyrgyzstan in post-Soviet Central Asia, there used to be a uranium mine. Its closure in the early 1990s led to massive unemployment in the area. But now the desperately poor local residents have found a new way to survive.

They sift through the waste dumped near the disused mine - "a moonscape of grey slag" - in search of material that they can sell to scrap merchants. There is iron and other metals, and graphite, but most valuable is silicon, which fetches \$10 per kilo and ends up at electronics plants in neighbouring China. About a third of the diggers are children. Some of their teachers are there too, for they can't get by on the pittance called a salary. Injuries are frequent. Some people get buried alive when the holes they are digging cave in.

Of course, there are many such places in the "undeveloped" countries. But this one has an additional hazard. The waste is full of radioactive gas (up to 400 micro-roentgens per hour). The diggers, their bodies covered with festering sores, are dying of radiation sickness. They are fully aware of the fact, but as one man said: "Better I die of radiation than my children of hunger."

Now for a little thought experiment. Suppose these people had been rounded up at gunpoint and forced to do this work on the orders of some military junta or Islamist or "communist" dictatorship. Just imagine the furore that human rights organizations around the world would raise against the regime committing such atrocities.

But they were not rounded up at gunpoint, and no armed guards are needed to keep them at their labours. They are "independent market actors" - "entrepreneurs," indeed, legally free to leave the scrap collecting business whenever they like. So none of their "human rights," as the term is usually understood, has been violated. They are lucky enough to live in a country that has been fulsomely praised as a model "democracy" with an excellent "human rights record" - at least by Central Asian standards. And yet they are not a whit better off for all that.

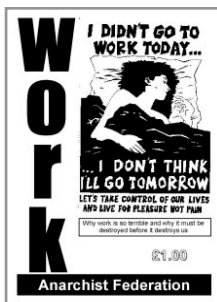
For there is one human right that they lack, and without it other human rights are not worth very much. They do not have the right of *access to the means of life*. "I wanted to work on the land," another digger remarked, "but unfortunately I don't have any." Quite so. And back into the radioactive gas... ■

Source: *Institute of War and Peace Reporting (London), Reporting Central Asia*, No. 438, March 10, 2006.

STEFAN

Recipe for disaster?

Work. Anarchist Federation. £1.00



It might be thought that a pamphlet on work would begin by setting out what is going to be meant by the word. But this pamphlet does not do so. Instead, it uses the word in two different, even contradictory, senses. Work "must be destroyed before it

destroys us", proclaims the front cover. "Work is a disease" says an illustration. "Arguments against work" is one chapter heading.

But another chapter is headed "Work in a free society" though even this has the subtitle "freedom begins where work ends". So, after all, work is not going to be destroyed? It is not a disease (or, if it is, it's still going to exist in a "free society"?). So, in a free society, we are not going to be free when we work?

In physics work is the expenditure of energy. For humans, it is the exercise of a person's physical and material energies to produce something that has some use, an unavoidable feature of human existence which has to take place in all societies and so cannot be abolished or destroyed. Under capitalism most work takes the form of employment, which is the things the pamphlets says: boring, meaningless, done for the benefit of an employer. It is employment - working for wages - , not work as such, that is a "disease" that can be abolished. What is required is the transformation of work, not its impossible abolition.

The authors of *Work* make some strong and valid criticisms of the human consequences of capitalist *employment*. For many workers it means physical and nervous exhaustion, illness, often anti-social laws, damaged family relationships, the intensification and lengthening of the working week, job insecurity, the switch from long-term employment to sub-contracting and self-employment, usually with worse pay and conditions. Even the unemployed, they say, are now engaged in the "work" of "looking for work".

We agree that in "a society without 'employment', without bosses and wage labour", the work of producing what society needs will be quite different: it will be "freely chosen", "not measured at all" and an "expression of a person's pleasure in what they are doing".

Where we disagree is over how the Anarchist Federation envisage such a society coming into being - by a general refusal to work:

"We will take our hands from the plough and the loom, rise up from our desks, cast off our boots and overalls, walk out of the hotels and restaurants, leave the factory and office, meeting with others to join in their refusal to work as they celebrate ours".

This is a recipe for disaster. If (as this scenario assumes) people had reached the stage of wanting to abolish capitalism and its employment and wage labour, then a more sensible option would surely be to organise, not to stop working, i.e. to stop producing

with all the consequences this would have on social life, but to keep production going under worker control while the transfer through political action of social control from the capitalist class to the community as a whole takes place.

ALB

Pie in the sky

What Price the Poor? William Booth, Karl Marx and the London Residuum. By Ann Woodall, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005



William Booth

Booth and Marx arrived in London in 1849. Their reactions to the London poor, variously referred to as "the submerged tenth", "the dangerous class" or "the residuum" were very different. Booth, inspired mainly by evangelical Christianity in his home-town of Nottingham, set up the Salvation Army and offered them pie in the sky when they died. Yet in its early years the "Sally Army" was militant in its defence of the poor. "The Salvation Army", Engels noted, "revives the propaganda of early Christianity, appeals to the poor as the elect, fights capitalism in a religious way, and thus fosters an element of early Christian class antagonism which one day may become troublesome to the well-to-do who now find the ready money for it". But it never did become a problem for the well-to-do. As Roy Hattersley wrote in his biography of Booth, his social policy "was intended to ameliorate the worst features of the existing order rather than to change it". Early the next century, in George Bernard Shaw's play *Major Barbara*, the capitalist Undershaft responds to the accusation that he did not understand what the Salvation Army did for the poor: "Oh yes I do. It draws their teeth: that is enough for me as a man of business".

Marx refereed to the residuum as the "relative surplus population" which was comprised of both the "reserve army of labour", who could be employed, and the "lumpenproletariat" who could not. Woodall does a good job of explaining Marx's viewpoint on the necessary role of poverty under capitalism and the revolutionary socialist alternative.

LEW

A common humanity

Ancient Americans: rewriting the history of the New World. By Charles C. Mann. London :Granta Books, 2005



This book has three central claims, put forward with all the skill and understanding of a working popular science journalist. That pre-Columbus the Americas were more

populous than many have previously supposed; that humans have been in the Americas longer than supposed; and that the people there had shaped their own environments to a terrific extent - far from being the unspoilt wilderness of colonial lore.

In most of this Mann is merely communicating an emerging academic consensus that still has not filtered out into the popular domain. He highlights how children's schoolbooks still repeat stories about Indian life, culture and history that have subsequently been disproven. He also highlights how various vested interests have used the ideological constructions based on the previous histories for opposite ends, both aggressive industrialists and ecologists promoting various simplifying myths of naive Indians living in harmony with untamed nature.

Essentially, whilst without giving any definite backing to any particular population estimate, the book avers that the 'high counters' are now the dominant strand of demographic historiography. That most of the Americas were covered by human civilisations that would have been a match for most of the colonialist forces, if they had not succumbed to disease - disease that spread in advance of the European's arrival (indicating intercourse between the Indian civilisations) - disease that possibly wiped out about a fifth of the human race at that time.

Mann demonstrates how much of the habitat inhabited by Indians was inhospitable, but that they had, to use his metaphor, terraformed their environment. He uses the example of the Maya collapse - hundred of years prior to the arrival of the Europeans - to show how the environment humans had created could fall apart when neglected (as in this case) by civil war.

In this context, he demonstrates that the Americas had an independent discovery of agriculture, to the point of suggesting that Amazonian Indians effectively planted orchards to make good use of the forests difficult soil. He suggests that there were civilisations as venerable in their size and antiquity to equal the more famous supposed homes of civilisation in China and Sumeria (present day Iraq).

He uses one case, the domestication of maize, to show what American civilisation has contributed to the sum of human achievement, and highlights the crushing irony that it was the importation of maize to Africa, which allowed the population growth that made the slave trade possibly (the slaves were, it should be remembered, needed in part because the indigenous population of the Americas had died out).

Mann suggests that the image of the pristine wilderness was created by the fact that humans had ceased to manage these environments, that the so called savagery found in part of the Americas was not stone age tribes living lives without time or change, but the products of collapse and devastation.

This is hopeful stuff for socialists. If true, it confirms a common humanity shared by all the humans on the planet, and offers the prospect of adding rich unbroadcast stories of human achievement.

PS

Edinburgh and Glasgow Branches

DAY SCHOOL FOR SATURDAY 13 MAY 2006

In the Community Central Halls, 314 Maryhill Road, Glasgow

THE CHANGING FACE OF CAPITALISM

1.00pm to 2.15pm **WHAT NEXT FOR THE TRADE UNIONS?**

The trade union movement has played an important part in the development of working class ideas, but now it finds itself in a crisis. Its political product the Labour Party has proven to be just another capitalist party. Brian Gardner (Glasgow Branch) considers the dilemma that it faces with the worsening of pension conditions and the insecurity of modern technology.

2.15pm to 3.30pm **THE DEATH OF THE LEFT?**

The demise of the Russian and eastern European Communist Parties has led to a crisis on the so-called left. Various Leninist and Trotskyist groups claim to be socialist organisations. In this talk Paul Bennett (Manchester Branch) deals with their claims and offers the alternative of World Socialism with its rejection of leadership and the reform of capitalism.

3.30pm to 5.00pm **CAPITALISM? KIDS' STUFF**

In this session we play a 50 minute DVD *Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff* that likens the development of capitalism to a children's nursery. We examine how ownership gives rise to the state and all its coercive forces. We look at alternative ways of running society. We look at a moneyless, tradeless alternative to the profit system. This DVD was devised by and features Paddy Shannon (Lancaster Branch) He will deal with your questions and ideas.

Tea, coffee and light refreshments will be available, free of charge.
All welcome.

Summer School, Fircroft, 21-23 July, 2006

WHAT'S LEFT OF THE LEFT? Retreated or Defeated?

A slightly different format this year. Some speakers, but also some discussions groups considering papers and notes from overseas socialists. The object is to try to build up a global picture of the state of opposition to capitalism: what attacking moves and defences capitalist governments have made and what threats and/or opportunities this presents to the socialist movement.

Fircroft College has kindly held back its price increases so that we can maximise our numbers attending. Non-members are welcome. Full board for the weekend is £110. The Party can subsidise a small number of those attending at half price, but it's best to apply early. Free entry to all talks and discussion sessions.

For further information or booking a place (please don't leave it too late!) ring Ron Cook, **0121 553 1712**

Manchester

Monday, 22 May 8pm

WHY YOU SHOULD BE A SOCIALIST

Hare and Hounds,
Shudehill,
City Centre

Socialist Walk: a Thames tour of Rotherhithe.

Sunday, 11 June 11.00 am.
Meet at Canada Water tube station.

For information contact:

Vincent Otter on **07905 791638** or **020 8361 3017** or Richard Botterill on **01582 764929**

Chiswick

Tuesday, 16 May 8pm

THE LIBRARY OF EARLY SOCIALISTS

Speaker: Howard Comber
Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall,
Heathfield Terrace, W4 (nearest tube:
Chiswick Park).



Wrong about Ireland?

Dear Editors.

I was saddened by Richard Montague's "The Easter Rising - 90 Years On" (April *Socialist Standard*). Montague's contemptuous view is not shared by many socialists in Wales, to whom national liberation continues to be an aspiration. Even a bourgeois republic would be a blessed improvement and relief from eight centuries of thralldom, stagnating under English rule.

Whatever the faults of Padraig Pearse, James Connolly and the five other signatories of the Irish Proclamation of Independence at Easter 1916, they were men of principle and courage dedicated to the well-being of the working people of all Ireland. We honour their memory, and the noble cause for which they fought and died. Pob bendith arnynt!

ALUN HUGHES, National Secretary, Plaid Gornwydd Cymru/Communist Party of Wales.

Reply: *Members of the Socialist Party in and from Wales, including those who speak Welsh, do not aspire to "national liberation" but to the emancipation of all humanity through the establishment of world socialism. It is not "English rule" that is responsible for the problems faced by workers in Wales, but capitalism. Which is why they would continue even if a "bourgeois republic" were to be established in Wales. Just look at Ireland - Editors.*

Vauxhall election

Dear Editors,

In the April *Socialist Standard*, Ivan took the time and trouble to profile the Labour MP for Vauxhall, Kate Hoey. He correctly describes how she mal-represents the workers of South London who may have voted for her.

What he omits is the most tragic part of the story. Unlike workers in every other constituency at the last election, those in

Vauxhall had the opportunity to hear and vote for the case for socialism, because our candidate, Danny Lambert, stood against her in last year's general election.

It is worth noting, that alone at the hustings, Comrade Lambert put forward the case for the genuine interest of the workers, unlike Hoey and all her fellow pretenders to office.

Perhaps any south London electors who read Ivan's article may care to reflect and lament upon their choice; however some for them have the chance to put things right, as three socialist candidates are contesting the local elections in Lambeth this May, where workers will once again have the choice of voting to overthrow a rotten system.

BILL MARTIN (by email)

There is also a Socialist Party candidate standing in Kingston in the local elections on 4 May.



No Socialism in Russia

It is very important to the Socialist Party of Great Britain that there should be no confusion about the state of affairs in Russia. The aim of the S.P.G.B. is to see Socialism established everywhere but our propaganda for Socialism is hampered by the belief, held by some people, that Socialism means the kind of social arrangements that existed in Russia under Stalin and exist still. There is no truth in this whatsoever. There is no Socialism (or Communism) in Russia, nor has there ever been.

What Russia has is a régime of dictatorship, administering what can best be described as a largely State Capitalist social system. The State apparatus is controlled by the Communist Party of Russia, the only political party that is allowed to exist in that country. Farical so-called elections are held, but, as the workers of Russia are not allowed to form political parties of their own choice, only members of the Communist Party and those approved by them are permitted to stand at election and be elected. This is an issue by which to assess the recent talk of changed conditions in Russia. Stalin is dead and some of his actions have been repudiated but it is still the case that no political party is allowed to exist in Russia except the Communist Party. It was over 20 years ago that Stalin had to admit to some visiting Americans

that in Russia "only one party, the party of the workers, the Communist Party, enjoys legality." ("Interviews with Foreign Workers' Delegates". Published in Moscow 1934, p.13.)

The same idea had been pithily put still earlier by Bukharin, who declared that in Russia there is room for any number of political parties, as long as one is in power and the others in prison.

The British Communist Party has just reaffirmed its confidence in the Communist Party of Russia. Let it clearly be understood that this is a renewed declaration of support by the British Communist Party for a regime that suppresses all independent working class political activity. While this condition remains it is idle to pretend that the new rulers of Russia are showing evidence of a changeover from dictatorship to more democratic arrangements.

In asserting that there never has been Socialism in Russia the S.P.G.B. is not making a late discovery. Right from 1917 when the Communists were able to get power in Russia it has been emphasised by the S.P.G.B. that Socialism has not been established in that country.

(From editorial, *Socialist Standard*, May 1956)

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Honour rooted in dishonour

We have been here before. We were here when New Labour were gleefully exploiting the Tories' embarrassment over episodes of sleaze like Neil Hamilton

and his cash for questions, while Tony Blair was encouraging the voters to believe that everything would be better, more open and honest, when he was at the head of the government. The party rosettes and the election manifestos had hardly been pushed down into the waste bins when that particular deception was exposed by the Bernie Ecclestone affair. Since then there has been a steady trickle of similarly discomfiting events. And now there is the engulfing flood of revelations of "honours" being awarded in exchange for donations and loans to the party or to finance some of Blair's desperate sticking plaster reforms of hospitals, schools... It is serious enough to involve the police, with one person arrested.

This raises the question of why there have been no prosecutions for something which has been illegal since 1925. It was Lloyd George who, as might be expected, was most infamously involved in what he described to a Tory MP as "...the cleanest way of raising money for a political party. The worst is that you cannot defend it in public". In line



Gregory



Grayson

with this he defended and promoted it in private, by appointing an agent, Maundy Gregory, to arrange the sale of honours - for, of course, a suitable commission. Gregory operated from a dauntingly expensive office in the heart of Whitehall, complete with uniformed flunkey. His price list varied from £80,000 to £120,000 for a viscountcy to £10,000 to £15,000 for a knighthood. Less affluent clients were also looked after; for them Lloyd George invented the OBE, which cost about £100. The Labour MP Victor Grayson, perhaps in an effort to revive a flagging political career, denounced the sale of honours through the work of "a monocled dandy with offices in Whitehall". Soon afterwards he was mysteriously beaten up and then disappeared in suspicious circumstances, leading to the assumption that he had been murdered. Apart from such regrettable lapses Lloyd George and Gregory ran a civilised and profitable business, quite unthreatened by the fact that Lloyd George had sneered at the Lords as "...five hundred men, ordinary men chosen accidentally from among the unemployed".

Retirement

So blatant was the racket, from which Lloyd George made about £1.5million (about £150 million today) and Gregory about a fifth of that amount, that in 1925 it was deemed necessary to pass the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act, which should have landed a whole clutch of politicians, Tory as well as Labour, in trouble. In fact the only person to have been prosecuted was Gregory himself, who in 1933 was sent to prison for two months. After this "punishment" he retired comfortably to France on a generous pension as the price of his silence. The Tory MP who brokered that deal was awarded with a knighthood by the Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, who whinged that the Tory Leader Baldwin had involved him "...in a scandal by forcing me to give an honour because a man has paid £30,000 to get Tory headquarters and some Tories out of a mess". Was this, we may wonder, the same Ramsay MacDonald who had once described himself as a socialist?

And that was not the end of the affair, because since Gregory went about his odious business the sale of honours, under many guises, has continued to thrive. The Wilson government created Lords Sainsbury and Hamlyn, both of them contributors to party finances. Notoriously, the owner of the company which manufactured the Gannex raincoat so beloved by Wilson was ennobled as Lord Kagan; he was later jailed for corruption. Then there was Sir Eric Miller, who avoided further attentions from the Fraud Squad by committing suicide. That many of the peerages arranged by the Wilson government were rewards for donations to Labour Party funds was confirmed by Joe Haines, who was a kind of predecessor to Alastair Campbell in Wilson's Downing Street. Although there is evidence that Wilson was not entirely happy about his awards, feeling that he was under pressure from party fund raisers, his retirement nominations (the infamous "lavender list") was full of party donors and cronies. Haines refused to be included in it because he "...did not wish to appear in the kind of list which had Joe Kagan and Eric Miller and others whom I regarded as undeserving".

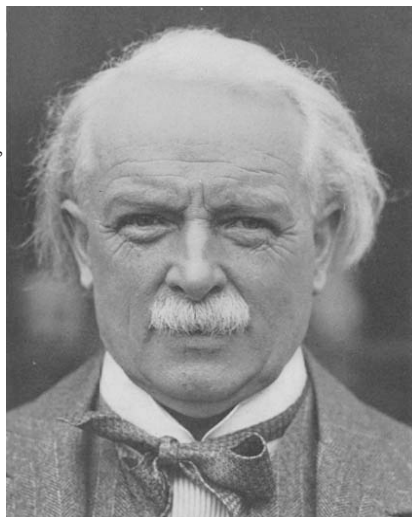
Heath

Among all these double dealings Ted Heath was something of an aberration. Although he reversed Wilson's decision to stop giving out political honours he was so sparing in his awards that he thought he had "...caused some grumbling among party members". During his three and three quarters years in office he nominated 34 new life peers, in contrast to the following five years of Labour government under Wilson and Callaghan when 144 "suitable" candidates were put up. The payback for what Heath called "grumbling" came when he was confronted with Thatcher in the 1975 leadership contest. A number of backbenchers seemed likely to have taken revenge for their disappointment at being overlooked for a comfortable, unchallenged seat in the Lords which they saw as the just reward for their long abasement to the needs of the party.

With the advent of Thatcher things in the Tory party got back to what might be called normal. The Iron Lady established a reputation second only to Lloyd George's for systematically using the honours system to raise money for the party or to reward or cajole restless backbenchers. Between 1979 and 1985 eleven industrialists were made peers after donating a total of £1.9 million to party finances; among them were Victor Matthews who gave £210,000, shipping magnate William Cayzer who gave £410,531 and Frank Taylor of the building firm Taylor Woodrow who donated £367,510. Then there were the knighthoods for the likes of Keith Showering (£424,000) and Nigel Brookes (£210,000). It was all summed up by the former MP, Chief Whip and Foreign Secretary Francis Pym who, undeterred by the fact that he himself had been ennobled as Lord Pym, told the Neill Committee on Standards in Public Life that "...a person had to put money where their mouth is to be considered for an honour".

Labour

But all of that was supposed to have ended when New Labour



Lloyd George - invented the honours scam which PMs have followed since.

arrived in Downing Street with their pledge to replace sleaze with transparency (politician's jargon for motivated obscurity) and reward on merit (to be assessed on the size of a donation). In some cases big money has been given to support the new city academies, which are supposed to be an improvement on schools which were "failing" because their pupils were performing as might be expected from the area they live in, the depth of their family poverty and the bleakness of their life horizons. The latter-day Maundy Gregory with the job of organising these donations was Des Smith, a head teacher who was also a schools adviser to the government. Smith was persuaded to tell an under cover reporter from the Sunday Times that someone could expect to get one of a range of honours depending on how much money they put into the academies, from an OBE for one academy to a knighthood for two and a peerage - a "certainty" - for five. As a result of his venture into that particular branch of New Labour transparency Mr. Smith has been the subject of close interest from the police.

But in a sense donations to the academies are actually to the Labour Party, since they are designed to boost the party's chances at the next election by financing one of Blair's pet projects. Rather more straightforward were the loans from individuals, which the party has defended on the grounds that the money was lent at "commercial" rates - which raises the question of why they did not simply approach their bank instead of people who had rather a lot to gain through lending the money. For example there is Ron Aldridge, chairman of the company Capita which paid him £501,000 in 2004. He also has shares in the company worth some £60 million. Capita has contracts to supply "support services" to the Criminal Records Bureau (which was not among their finest achievements); it runs call centres for the BBC and the NHS and it collects the London Congestion Charge. Aldridge has lent the party £1 million; he got an OBE in 1994. Another lender is Barry Townsley, chairman of a stock broking firm who was barred from the Stock Exchange trading floor in the 1980s after a scandal involving some share deals. He has lent the party £1 million. Townsley was recommended for a peerage by Tony Blair but he refused the offer, saying it was not worth the negative publicity.

Irony

It is clearly misleading to refer to the baubles and titles dished out to venal business people and party hangers-on as honours. There is nothing honourable about them, except that they conform to the morality of capitalism. This is a society based on, and ruled by, the principle that sale and profit is a celebration while redundancy and loss is a tragedy. Yet the mouthpieces of capitalism, when it suits them, tell us that there are rewards for a finer morality where human service counts above the crudities of the balance sheet. It is ironically appropriate that even capitalism's "honours" are for sale. Yes we have been here before and will be here again. ■

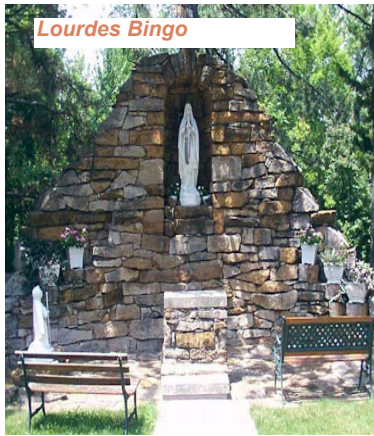
IVAN



Voice from the Back

Miracle Worker

The Roman Catholic Church is not the unchanging, dogmatic organisation that its critics make out. Take their reform of what constitutes a miracle. " Lourdes miracles get a little easier. ... Monsignor Jaques Perrier, Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes and the most senior cleric at the Catholic shrine, announced a "reform" of miracles there last week. Henceforth there will be new categories of "healing", recognised which takes into account advances of modern science. These will include "unexpected healings", "confirmed healings" and "exceptional healings". Critics say he is "devaluing" God's interventions in order to counter increasingly fierce competition in France from evangelical and Pentecostal churches" (*Observer*, 2 April). Nothing dogmatic about that, simply redefining their product to deal with the competition. It makes good marketing sense in a competitive society.



Lourdes Bingo

Testament expert from the University of Aberdeen and John Pritchard, Bishop of Jarrow are doubtful about the whole affair. Is it not wonderful that these learned men can get so worked up about ancient myths and yet remain silent about 8 million kids dying from lack of food and clean water every year?

Contrasts (1)

In a world where millions of children are dying of hunger the following item illustrates the madness of capitalism. "For most of us a sandwich is often the quickest, easiest and cheapest snack option - but try telling that to Selfridges. The upmarket store is about to unveil what it claims is the country's most expensive sarnie, costing a whopping £85.50. At the core of the 22cm x 13cm sandwich are slices of prime Wagyu beef, which gourmands agree is among the most succulent in the world. ... The meat will be flown in from Chile every day to ensure it is as fresh as possible (*Metro.co.uk*, 7 April).

Contrasts (2)

In the same issue of a newspaper we learn of the different lives of the exploited and those who live on exploitation. "Hundreds of people dressed in tattered rags, crawl ant-like over great mounds of mud. Barefoot children, some as young as 6, burrow deep into the hillside" (*Times*, 10 April) This is a description of the copper and cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where children are risking their lives for as



Congo miners

little as \$1 a day. On another page we read of the Duchess of Cornwall. "The Duchess wore the same red Phillip Treacy hat that she had worn the day after her wedding. Since her marriage she has developed a reputation for frugality. On their recent tour to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and India she wore the same outfit on three occasions."

Monks In Retreat

Socialists recognise we have a difficult task in convincing workers of the necessity of transforming capitalism to socialism. Some of our opponents claim that it is an impossible task and point to the tremendous influence of religious ideas. We claim that the advance of capitalism itself makes religious ideas less and less popular. Here is a recent example. "Monks and their monasteries go into retreat as recruits dwindle. Monks first arrived in Britain almost 2,000 years ago but they are now in danger of all but disappearing within a generation, figures suggest. A growing number of Roman Catholic monasteries are being sold as their ageing communities are hit by death and plunging vocations" (*Daily Telegraph*, 10 April).



Getting out of the habit

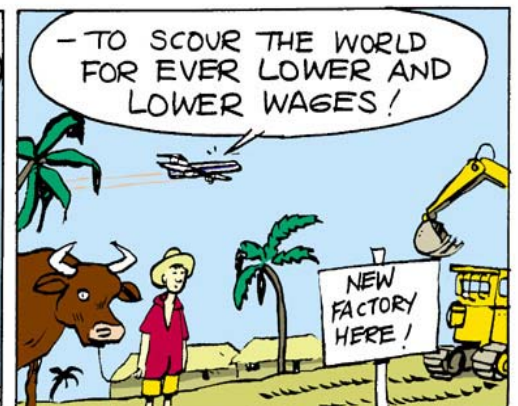
The Profit System

The whole purpose of production inside capitalism is to make a profit, if no market exists they sometimes have to invent one. "The practice of "disease-mongering" by the drugs industry is promoting non-existent illnesses or exaggerating minor ones for the sake of profits, according to a set of essays published by the open-access journal Public Library of Science Medicine" (*Times*, 1 April) Inside a socialist society we will deal with the real illnesses not frighten people about imagined ones in order to make a few quid. Capitalism is really a disgusting society. Let's get rid of it.

Judas The Obscure

A storm is brewing in academic circles as biblical scholars cross swords about the role of Judas in the bible story. "A papyrus manuscript discovered in the Egyptian desert was hailed yesterday as an authenticated copy of the lost Gospel of Judas - revealing that far from betraying Jesus, Judas sacrificed himself for his master" (*Times*, 7 April). Craig Evans, Payzant distinguished Professor of New Testament at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, Nova Scotia and Marvin Meyer, Grist Professor of Bible and Christian studies and Director of the Albert Schweitzer Institute of Chapman University, California are enthusiastic about the manuscript. Dr Simon Gathercole, a New

Free Lunch



by Rigg

socialist standard

June 2006 Vol. 102 No. 1222 £1

Journal of The Socialist Party - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Fear and the Far Right



Inside the mind of Xenophobia



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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 3 June** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.

TEL: 020 7622 3811

E-MAIL: spgb@worldsocialism.org

Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

World Socialist Literature



World Socialist Review: the journal of the World Socialist Movement in the United States. £1.30 including postage.
Socialist Banner: the quarterly journal of the World Socialist Movement in Africa. £1.00 including postage.

From The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.
Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

Editorial

They call it sport, m'lud

Prepare yourself for the big business and sporting festival (we put them in this order for a reason) that is the World Cup. From the first game in Munich on 9 June to the final in Berlin one month later, there will be sixty-four matches, each one keenly contested by players, media and supporters alike.

Like all big international sporting occasions these days, sponsorship and advertising are very much the name and motivation of the game. The tournament's 'partners', such as McDonald's, Budweiser and Mastercard, are paying vast sums of money to get their brands and logos in prominent positions both during and between matches. Moreover, one ticket in eight (nearly half a million in all) will go to sponsors, enabling their bosses and other VIPs to enjoy the games while genuine fans are excluded. In many of the grounds, seating capacity has been reduced in order to increase the number and size of advertising hoardings and hence the income for the organisers, FIFA. The 'rights' to TV coverage will of course add millions more to their coffers.

No doubt the media will stoke up nationalist sentiments, especially the rivalry between England and Germany. 'Two World Wars, One World Cup' will be the refrain, particularly if the two countries play each other, as they may well do in the second round. Sadly, many of the supporters will echo the jingoistic nonsense of the press, fighting the wrong battles and misdirecting their energy and enthusiasm. How

many St George's flags will be flying from cars, houses and pubs while the tournament is on? Those supporters actually in Germany will additionally be paying the rip-off prices for tickets and accommodation, and trying to steer clear of the attention of police and hooligans.

Of course English nationalism is not the only kind which will be on display, for



each of the thirty-two countries competing will bring its own brand of patriotic myth to the proceedings. The invented and historically-accidental entities known as countries have become the focus of so many workers' loyalties, as if it really matters which bit of the earth people were born in or 'belong' to. It would be nice to think that meeting supporters from elsewhere will show

that ordinary people, whatever language they speak or whatever passport they carry, have far more in common with each other than with their bosses and rulers.

So, if you like football, enjoy watching the World Cup if you can. But behind all the endless televised replays and the post-match inquests into fouls and off-sides, remember that it's all part of the greater game of dividing workers from each other. A socialist world would have no countries and no national teams. And there would be no sectional interests for some group of people at the expense of other members of the global community. In the meantime, the crying need is for workers to realise that nationalism is a diversion along the road - not to Wembley or Cardiff or Berlin - but to a sensible society.

Socialist Party Summer School 2006. Fircroft College, Birmingham, 21-23 July

WHAT'S LEFT OF THE LEFT?

What has happened to The Left in Britain? Has it happened in other countries too? Has capitalism itself changed? In other words, what is the social context and the climate of thought in which we are trying to promulgate socialism? During this weekend we shall try to piece together information from different countries to give us an indication of what is happening in today's capitalism and in particular what is happening to working class reactions to it so that we may make informed judgements about how best to direct our own efforts.

PROGRAMME

Friday Evening:	The state of The Left in China	Paul Bennett
Sat'day Morning(1):	The state of The Left in France	Adam Buick
Sat'day Morning(2):	The state of The Left in Germany	Norbert Sanden
Saturday Afternoon:	"The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" DVD showing	
Saturday Evening:	Relating to The Left in Britain	Brian Gardner
Sunday Morning:	The state of The Left in Canada	Tristan Miller
Sunday Afternoon:	Overseas reports discussed	Andy Davies (Chair)

Fircroft College is set in green gardens on the south-west side of Birmingham at 1016 Bristol Rd.(A38), one of the group of Selly Oak Colleges in the Cadbury foundation. From Birmingham New Street railway station, buses 61, 62, & 63 cost £1.20. Tea will be available in the common room from 4 o'clock on Friday afternoon.



Game On

A man from Sydney, Australia, buys an island populated by wild animals for \$26,500, and charges tax for hunting rights, as well as renting beachfront property. This is perfectly normal behaviour in capitalism. The money he earns from it is real enough. The island, however, does not exist. It is a virtual island, with virtual animals. (New Scientist, May 20)

Elsewhere, in Shanghai, a man lends his prized sword to a friend, who then secretly sells it for 7200 yuan (£500), back-pocketing the proceeds. Furious, the man complains to the police, who do nothing. Enraged, he breaks into his friend's house, and stabs him to death. The knife he uses is real enough, and the man gets life imprisonment for murder. No action is ever taken over the original theft, because the sword does not exist according to any known law. Real blood spilled by a virtual sword.

From Carolina, one man has made a fortune selling rare virtual furniture and other items, which, he discovered through a bug in the program, he could duplicate, and sell over and over again. Nobody knows if he has broken a law. The game company closed the bug hurriedly, but not before the man had cleared \$100,000.

Online gaming is moving beyond the purview of geeky kids. Virtual items and goods, though theoretically worthless, acquire value in the real world as players seek to shortcut the time-consuming process of acquiring them in the game, and serious money is being made in the 'grey market' of virtual trading. Now game currencies have been indexed to real currencies, and one game developer, MindArk, has launched an ATM cashcard that players can use to withdraw real cash, calculated according to MindArk's exchange rate of their 'game' wealth. The global trade in virtual goods is currently estimated at \$880 million and rising, with 30 million, mostly western and mostly affluent gamers, playing games for up to 18 hours a day. In one popular online game, Second Life, a third of the players spend more time in the game than in the real world.

It's not hard for socialists to see why people would want to escape the rigid fetters of real-time capitalism. People have been escaping the real conditions of life ever since the Greeks invented the outdoor theatre. What is slightly depressing but perhaps not very surprising is that people work so hard at their escapist fantasies only to create societies of lawlessness, savagery and insane self-destructive cruelty that make capitalism look like a pussycat by comparison. In one game, players are dedicated to the task of setting off virtual semtex bombs and blowing themselves and their online world up. In others, there are virtual assassinations, or random slayings, where players find their character has been murdered for no particular reason, apart from somebody's idle amusement. A player can take a long time, sometimes years, to build a character up, provide it with its special faculties and powers, as well as its virtual property. To be robbed and murdered after all this work is no small thing and can be deeply upsetting to the player. But this is the virtual wild west, and there is a nihilistic appeal. Law doesn't appear to work in people's interest in the real world (true, in many ways), so the idea is to get rid of all law and have an orgy of violence and blood in the games.

The problem is, as with the Shanghai murder, the violence is starting to spill over into the real world, prompting some observers to

suggest that law and punishment should be introduced into the games. The game developers are opposed. What is the point of

playing a game that lets you do nothing? That's just like real life, the very thing people want to run away from.

The other problem, from a socialist view, is the constant reinforcement these blood-thirsty games give to the perceived need for law and policing. For these are, in a way, highly moral games, in that they strongly emphasize what dread chaos results from 'amoral' or lawless behaviour. Socialism proposes to abolish all coercive law which serves class interests (which is to say, all property law, at the very least). What laws under capitalism socialism would retain as rules is a moot but interesting question. What is evident however is that no rational debate on the socialist need for laws, or rules, or their nature or means of enforcement, is possible among workers while they are bamboozled into believing that a society without repressive legal structures is always going to look like a scene from Conan the Barbarian. Play one of these online games for a week and you will either become a nightmare axe-murderer from the Dark Ages or you will be screaming for the return of capital punishment and school floggings.

Why normal bank clerks and home heating engineers should want to lead double-lives as marauding rapists and genocidal maniacs is a topic too large to enter into here. But it would be interesting to speculate what a socialist society would make of it. Would they look back at capitalism and trace a pattern from the Boy's Own stories of Empire days with their strongly moral content, through the poignant emptiness of punk culture and on into the cybernight of shoot-em-ups and global conquest games and say: there, that was a society in decline? By giving reality to the horrors of the repressed mind is capitalism liberating or enslaving us even more deeply? Will there come a point, perhaps with the total abolition of hard cash, when capitalism will itself become a virtual game, with a human population of players who try to amass arbitrary 'units' of currency in order to buy arbitrary artifacts? The difference between real life and a game is that you always have to return to real life eventually, but it is just possible that this difference may one day disappear, and our grip on reality may disappear with it.

Avatar character from Second Life

Game Off

On a more positive note, a friend who is a computer repairman reports a recent case where a young man came in to have his computer repaired. The graphics card, an expensive one, had blown, and the cost would be over £300. The man appeared, and was given the bad news. He went away to think about it. A week later he returned.

"£300 is a lot of money when you don't have a job. I can't get a job because I'm too busy playing online for 16 hours every day. I haven't been to a pub in two years, all my friends have disowned me, and I never see anybody. On top of that, I'm bored with the games because I am Grandmaster in all of them and can't be beaten. In the past week I've gone to the pub, gone to a party, found all my friends and even met some new ones. In fact, I've had the time of my life. Tell you what. You can keep the bloody computer."

And with that, he walked out into the real world.



Redirecting production to meeting needs

Dear Editors,

An important part of the Socialist Party's case for socialism as a world wide system where production takes place on the basis of need and for social use with free access to goods and services, is that there is sufficient productive capacity to produce such an abundance of socially needed and useful goods and services so as to enable free access, thus eliminating scarcity and the need for money.

At the present time there is self-evidently no such abundance in the actual production of socially needed and useful goods and services and it would appear on the surface that the gap between current reality and your aspiration is enormous.

I would be interested to know if there has been any work to try and prove that the required capacity to generate such abundance is in fact already in existence and that all that is required - as you imply - is that the existing means of production and distribution be simply redirected to socially useful ends, once a socialist majority takes power out of the hands of the capitalist class?

It ought to be relatively straightforward to - in albeit speculative and approximate terms - quantify the sort of total productive capacity, presumably in terms of required labour hours, required to generate an abundance of essential goods and services, to meet the basic needs of every human being in the world.

Then compare that with total productive capacity at the present time. Then show how much of existing productive capacity would be released upon the cessation of

wasteful, non essential and dangerous activities e.g. military production, state bureaucracy, finance related activities, shoddy consumer goods etc and therefore potentially able to be redirected to socially useful and needed production.

Then build in an assumption about much existing productive capacity could then be increased through the employment of labour saving technologies and at the same time show how massive reductions in working lives, working weeks and days - which must be one of the prime outcomes of the successful establishment of socialism and the true liberation of the working class - would be delivered, and still leave sufficient labour power to generate abundance.

To do this would be to surely produce an extremely decisive and compelling case for immediate social change, instead of having to rely on rather glib and optimistic assumptions, which to most people at the moment seem completely unreal.

ANDREW NORTHALL, Northampton

Reply: It is true that the growth and expansion of capitalism has developed a structure of global production that could be a basis for a socialist system. However, this is very different to saying that it is currently adequate to provide for needs. The main reason is that under capitalism production is determined by market capacity for sales and taking the system as a whole, market capacity is always much less than would be required to satisfy needs. It follows that people in socialism would need to expand useful production and practicality means that it would take time.

However, the freedoms that would be enjoyed which would make this straightforward. The bringing in of new means of pro-

duction would be free from the constraints of capital investment; the abolition of the market would mean that it could no longer determine what could be produced; with voluntary cooperation replacing the wage-labour relationship communities would decide what should be done and would be free to organise their resources to achieve those aims. This would be democratic control of the organisation of production directly for needs.

Some work has been done on the question of how existing useful production should be increased to be able to meet needs. For example, it has been suggested that world food production would have to be increased by at least 60 per cent to get to a position of sufficiency for everybody on the planet. In general this is a complex question; a growing socialist movement would no doubt develop its plans for what should be the priorities action following the establishment of common ownership. What we can say is that a socialist system would release huge powers of production with perhaps the only constraint being that they would have to be used in ways that safeguard the environment - *Editors*.

S is for Socialism

Dear Editors,

In an article in *The Nation* (17 April) entitled "The Left Needs More Socialism", Ronald Aronson states clearly that it is time for the 'left,' 'progressives', etc to stop being afraid of using the 's' word, recognise what they stand for and call a spade a spade.

He doesn't actually promote *socialism* per se but does promote what it stands for and says that progressives are failing to offer a real alternative (specifically in US politics

continued on page 18

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BNP supporters

The BNP advances - what does it mean?

The BNP gained seats in the May local elections because it put together a better package of lies than the mainstream parties.

Despite recent claims to the contrary, the vast majority of British voters find the policies of the BNP nauseating. In the run up to the 2004 local and European elections and again during the 2005 general election, all manner of people, organised in their respective groupings, mobilised against them, from Labour and Conservative Party activists and the myriad left-wing groups, to student bodies, church groups and trade unions. Back in 2004, Searchlight, the anti-Nazi magazine, produced 28 versions of a newspaper targeting the BNP election campaign and distributed 1.5 million copies in areas where the BNP were perceived as posing the biggest threat. Prior to this year's elections, Searchlight handed out 400,00 copies of their newspaper in 16 versions as well as quarter of a million post-cards and again the left and the unions campaigned where the BNP were felt to be most active.

This time round, by all accounts, the panic was just as big as in 2004. In the wake of a huge election push by the BNP, Searchlight identified 18 key "battle-grounds" where the neo-Nazis had to be confronted. Other anti-racist groups observed how the BNP, standing 364 candidates, were as strong now than at any time since 1982, when it displaced the National Front as Britain's favourite bone-

head magnet. Ever the pessimists, anti-racist organisations believed BNP pre-election claims could be an underestimate and suggested that a 5 percent swing to the BNP could see them increase their tally of councillors to 70.

Regardless of how much these smiley-faced fascists claim to have changed their image, supposedly booting out the bone-headed troublemakers of yesteryear, they still represent the politics of hate - and their writings and statements still contradict the respectable shirt-and-tie image they try so hard to project. For over six months BNP literature had been portraying the coming elections as a "Referendum on Islam", linking the threat of Islamist terrorism in Britain to the Labour Government's asylum and immigration policies and the war in Iraq. One BNP leaflet, handed out in the wake of the 7/7 bombings in London, declared: "If only they had listened to the BNP."

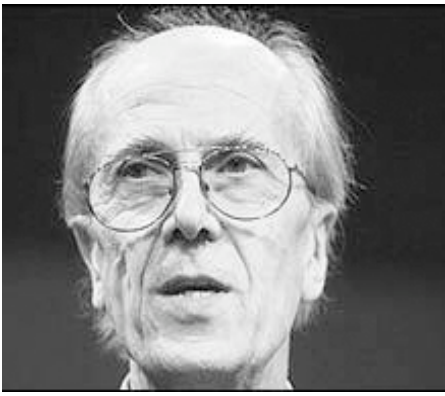
Moreover, the BNP's anti-Islam position has gained in prominence since Nick Griffin was acquitted of racial hatred charges at Leeds Crown Court back in February. It did not help that the judgment came at the same time as the hullabaloo over the anti-Muslim Danish cartoons and the consequent display by a handful of young Muslims dressed as suicide bombers and demonstrating in London, a coinci-

dence that allowed the BNP to pass itself off as the champion of freedom of speech and all things British.

Overnight, the BNP moved further to the right in its anti-Moslem line of attack. Heartened by what they perceive as a lowering of tolerance for Islam, the BNP has become more obsessive. Speaking to the *Observer*, (24 April), Simon Darby, the man BNP leader Nick Griffin has appointed to take over should an appeal to re-convict him go ahead, said: "We are giving voice to the concerns of ordinary people, Yes, part of it is still about race." Since 9/11 and 7/7, he says, "things have changed: the new issue is Islam".

Wave of patriotism

Two years ago the BNP were fortunate to ride a wave of patriotism - a tool they can use to great effect when it suits - in the run up to the election, with voters going to the polls as the 60th anniversary of D-Day was being commemorated and rammed down our throats every night on TV, and the English football team were gearing up to compete in Euro 2004 and when manufacturers were reporting sales of 4 million St George flags. This time round they could count on the nationalism whipped up by the World Cup taking place in Germany as well as the patriotism created by the Queen's 80th birthday celebrations. And



Lord Tebbit: 'BNP more Left than Right'



Margaret Hodge: '80 per cent of electorate would vote BNP'

neither is their raw branch of nationalism that unique in today's climate where UKIP and the Conservative Party can make huge gains in the European elections on a "say no to Europe" platform, proclaiming the merits of British sovereignty, and where the Labour Party is all too ready to send British troops off to far away lands to protect the interests of Britain's ruling elite.

Recent scandals within the mainstream reformist parties, particularly the Labour Party, and coming in election week, clearly helped boost the BNP vote, resulting in their tally of councillors leaping from 20 to 48. Not least of which was the Home Office fiasco involving the release of foreign prisoners from British prisons, many of whom went on to reoffend, and which played straight into BNP hands. The sleaze turned many would-be voters away from the polling stations too - something the BNP further capitalised on with their supporters making a point of going to the polls. For instance, the BNP claimed a surprising win from Labour in Solihull, when it won the Chelmsley Wood ward by 19 votes, taking its first seat on the council there. But look closely and we see that in Chelmsley Wood 74 per cent of the electorate did not bother turning up to vote.

In the borough of Dagenham and Barking, the sitting Labour Party MP, Margaret Hodge, clearly made the BNP look like the party of the moment when she announced shortly before the election that she had discovered massive support for the BNP, offering that as many as 80 per cent of the electorate would vote for them. She commented: "That's something we have never seen before. They used to be ashamed to vote for the BNP. Now they are not." The media, of course, made much of this, with the BNP thriving on the oxygen of publicity.

Of course there were other factors at play in Dagenham and Barking where the BNP is now the main opposition to Labour with 11 councillors, such as the government's refusal to allow the council to build houses and the council's allocation of housing on a points basis. The areas continuing deindustrialisation, marked by job

losses in the docks and at the Ford plant in Dagenham, was also an issue the BNP could mobilise support around. Where the mainstream parties were seen as having let voters down, that was where the BNP found the greatest success.

Lord Tebbit, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* (21 April), had this to say about the BNP:

"I have carefully re-read the BNP manifesto of 2005 and am unable to find evidence of Right-wing tendencies. On the

"things have changed: the new issue is Islam"

other hand, there is plenty of anti-capitalism, opposition to free trade, commitments to 'use all non-destructive means to reduce income inequality', to institute worker ownership, to favour workers' co-operatives, to return parts of the railways to state ownership, to nationalise the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and to withdraw from Nato. That sounds pretty Left-wing to me."

It certainly does sound like left wing reformism, with the assumption being made that capitalism can be managed for the good of all.

Stuart Jeffries, considering Lord Tebbit's comments in the *Guardian*, (28th April), remarked that: "the notion that the BNP might be considered left-wing shows the political vacuum that Labour has created. Not that many of those who will vote BNP next week want to nationalise the commanding heights of the economy. Rather, alienated from their traditional party by its shameless plutocracy and neglect of its core support, some white working-class voters will opt for a party that offers easy lies about their plight." Suggesting that BNP support is rooted in the failure of mainstream reformism, Jeffries continued: "Blair may not be responsible for populist racism, but he and his party are responsible for putting despair

in place of hope from politics for many, and thus making the election of racists likely in several British towns."

Considering the views of the Labour and Conservative parties on asylum and the former's part in upsetting the Islamic world in recent years, their concern for the apparent rising support for the BNP does seem a mite misplaced. Labour and the Tories may well abhor the policies of the BNP, but have been unsuccessful in confronting them where they have made significant political gains because to do so would mean acknowledging the shortcomings of a system they champion and which gives rise to the politics of race and hate.

The BNP is more the product of the total failure of all the reformist parties to make capitalism a fit society to live in. And this is not really the fault of the mainstream parties, for they are controlled by the system and not vice versa, despite their claims and promises. When capitalism fails to deliver, when despondency and shattered hopes arise from the stench of the failed promises and expectations that litter the political landscape, is it any wonder that workers fall for the scapegoating nonsense of fascists and the quick fix they offer?

The hundreds of thousands of misinformed workers who swallowed the BNP spiel in May are the products of the demoralising system we know as capitalism, deluded into thinking that neo-nazi solutions to social problems - which they have been led to believe are largely rooted in the colour of a person's skin - would suddenly improve their miserable lives. In truth, a shortage of council housing and poorly-maintained housing estates, low wages and pittance benefits are no more the fault of asylum seekers than the mainstream parties, who mistakenly believe capitalism can be run in the interests of the workers. At the end of the day the BNP simply put together a better package of lies and, just like the other reformist parties, promised voters little more than extra space at the trough of poverty - and tens of thousands, their minds numbed by the politics of reform, fell for the scam. ■

JOHN BISSETT

The witch hunt against ex-prisoners from abroad shows that xenophobia is now more than ever official policy.

Exporting Crime



Above: John Reid, Charles Clarke, and inside Brixton prison



It was in a desperate attempt to erase from the voters' consciousness the idea that his party would ever be indulgent towards law breakers that Tony Blair and his opinion sculptors chiselled out the pledge that a New Labour government would be "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime". That smooth phrase covered just about everything as far as crime went and it opened the way to a succession of Acts of Parliament which brought in new laws, regulations, surveillance and intrusions. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders had the effect of making many offences imprisonable when they had not been before. Procedural restraints on courts were relaxed to encourage offenders to plead guilty when they were innocent. New prisons have been opened in an attempt - unsuccessful as it happens - to gobble up those who fell foul of Labour's new penal policies. If all this had any real effect on the crime figures it has not been persuasively obvious but in any case the idea behind it all was to convince the voters - who are so often the sufferers from crime - that, whatever the truth of the matter, New Labour was doing something about it; given time they would eliminate it altogether.

But a serious problem with snappy, headline-grabbing slogans - Homes Fit for Heroes, You Never Had It So Good, The Pound in Your Pocket - is that capitalist society has a nastily remorseless habit of undermining them. When that happens the slogan ceases to be voter-seductive and becomes instead a repellent embarrassment. This has been the case over the government's record on deporting offenders who are foreign nationals on their release from prison. It did not sit easily with Blair's promise to be tough on crime, that such people should be free; the implicit fear was that they would use this freedom to commit other, perhaps even more serious, offences. As the media frantically dug for evidence, Home Secretary Charles Clarke admitted that at least five of the released foreign prisoners had committed further drugs-

related and violent offences; two others had been accused of rape, although in one case the charge had been dropped through lack of evidence.

Somalia

Most damaging of all was the case of Mustaf Jama, who came here as an asylum seeker from Somalia and for that reason was not sent back to that country when he had served a three-year jail sentence for robbery. Jama is one of the prime suspects for the murder of the police officer Sharon Beshenivsky in Bradford. He cannot at present be charged with this murder because he seems to have fled to Somalia, although the fear that he would have been killed if he had been sent back there was enough to keep him in this country. Predictably, this fuelled the tabloid hysteria and encouraged the fantasy that the country was infested with foreigners who were using their early release from prison to rack up even more offences. The uproar became so loud and insistent that it cost Charles Clarke his job; in spite of Blair's ritualistic assurances of boundless and never-dying confidence in him, Clarke was re-shuffled out of the Home Office and onto the back benches.

Another ritual was the official response to the pending storm of publicity. Last summer the Home Office admitted that there were some 400 released prisoners who under government policy might have been deported. But recently, in response to the determined chiselling away of the governmental wall of denial by the media and MPs, this figure was raised to 1023 - some of them convicted of murder, rape or child abuse. For a short time Clarke said that about 90 of these had been convicted of the "most serious" offences but one of the first actions of his successor John Reid was to raise this estimate to 150 and to elaborate by saying that to include those sentenced for robbery would put the total into "hundreds". Almost by the day, the situation looked worse for the government. It is as well to bear in mind that this mess - partly

a cumbersome, doomed attempt to distort the facts and partly a deliberate attempt to conceal the truth - was the work of the Home Office, which is so prominent in composing and enforcing the laws which are designed to instruct the rest of us in how to behave as the underclass in this society. The exposure of the concealment and the deception must have contributed to the Labour Party losing so many council seats in the recent local elections and perhaps, through the stimulation of a whole clutch of dangerous prejudices, to the relative success of the BNP.

Brixton

When he was Home Secretary in the 1960s the late Roy Jenkins said that it would be unacceptable for the prison population to reach 42,000. Now it is fast approaching 78,000 which, although there are many more places available than there were in Jenkins' day, is the officially defined maximum. The Prison Reform Trust has stated that of the 741 prisons 142 are occupied above the limits of health and safety. An ex-governor of Brixton, which is a typically hectic, stressful London prison, has said that too many people are being given custodial sentences; these were the words of a man whose reputation was as an unusually perceptive and humane holder of his office. However, during his time at Brixton a few prisoners managed to fiddle their way into an evening's freedom; the matter came to light when they were apprehended trying to wangle their way *back inside* in time to avoid detection. It was the end of Brixton's unofficial evenings at liberty and, when the outraged laughter had died down, of that governor's regime there.

Attempts to explain the increase in the prison population are soon confronted with the fact that the property rights of capitalism make for a huge cobweb of repression and denial of access to human

resources. Within that, as symptoms of class society, there is the fact that the incidence of crime can go up or down in response to a number of influences. One of them is that working lives and survival are as stressful, if not more so, than they have been for a long time. Another is that New Labour rhetoric about getting tough on offenders has resulted in stricter conditions on Community Orders and the courts, responding to the urgings from Downing Street, using prison sentences more often

"the country was infested with foreigners using their early release from prison to rack up even more offences"

than in the past. Then there is the fact that female crime has increased, so that more women are going to prison. And there is the rise in custodial sentences on foreign nationals who come before the courts. Over the past five years this figure has increased by 75 per cent, while that for British nationals has gone up by 11 per cent.

The foreign nationals in British prisons originate in over 160 countries, among them Jamaica, Somalia, Afghanistan, Algeria. These are countries notable for violence and social instability. In some cases - for example Somalia and Sierra Leone - there are problems in deporting released prisoners because it is too dangerous to fly there. Jamaica is described by Amnesty International (and other organisations) as a place where "Violence and

crime are rife (and where) Police officers are allowed to kill with impunity". United States Embassy staff in Jamaica are officially advised to avoid the inner city area of Kingston and of other towns and not to use public buses. Unsurprisingly, some of the people who come here from these strife-torn places bring their own strategies of survival, which might entail breaking the law here. Drug offences - mainly trafficking - account for about 60 per cent of the prison sentences and for 80 per cent of women prisoners, many of whom have harrowing stories to tell, of the poverty and fear in their home country which persuaded them to accept the hazardous role of smuggling in the drugs. It is a sad, tragic picture which is not relieved by vengeful punishment.

Delusions

New Labour's response to this situation is to take powers to deport released prisoners wherever possible - they plan to make this an automatic procedure in future - which may relieve some very short term problems as it enables the government to pose as taking drastic measures which will reduce crime at a stroke and so boost their chances of being returned at the next election. But it takes no account of the fact that other countries can return British nationals (there are some 800 in EU jails at present). It will not affect the level of crime here by British nationals, which has proved impervious to government policies, because crime, like private property, poverty, repression, is endemic to capitalism. The policy of trying to export foreign criminals is presented as something considered, effective and durable when in fact, apart from stimulating some of the nastier delusions such as racism and xenophobia, it is another panicky episode of exhausted futility. ■

IVAN



Cooking the Books (1)

Capitalist ideals

"The unacceptable face of capitalism" has become a standard term for excusing some

excess of capitalist enterprise as if capitalism could ever have an acceptable face. At the annual jamboree of the Institute of Directors at the end of April, Todd Stitzer, chief executive of the Cadbury Schweppes group, whined that "business bashing has become everyone's favourite sport".

"He said recent scandals and disasters, from 'Enron to Arthur Andersen to Exxon Valdez and Bhopal', were not typical. 'These episodes did expose the unacceptable face of capitalism . . . But the business world is not populated by malignant people determined to harm others and exploit the world for base profit'" (Daily Telegraph, 27 April).

He was also reported as saying that businesses had to try to convince the public that companies were "capitalists with ideals" (Times, 27 April).

Of course Stitzer and other heads of capitalist corporations are not (or at least

the vast majority of them aren't) "malignant people determined to harm others and exploit the world" but it remains true that their "ideal" is, and has to be, maximising profits, base or otherwise.

The personal views and motivations of business leaders are not relevant to the way the capitalist system works. Business leaders are cogs in the economic mechanism of the accumulation of capital out of profits derived from the surplus value produced by the class of wage and salary workers. They have to pursue a policy of maximising profits, even if this might "harm others and exploit the world", as this is what has to be done for their particular company - in fact, for any company - to stay in the competitive struggle for profits. If they didn't do it, somebody else would be found who would.

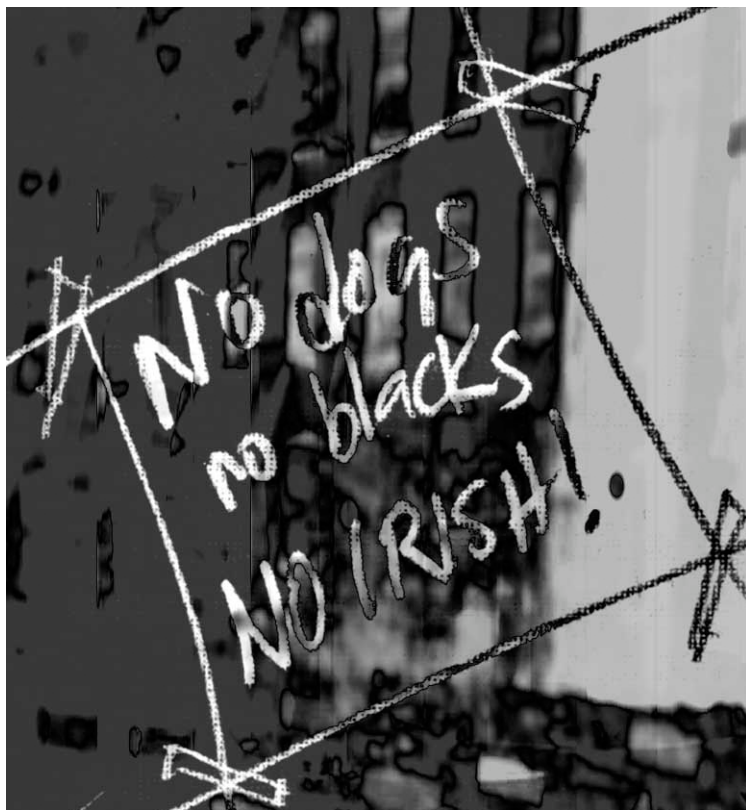
It is true that some of them seem to have completely internalised putting the making of profits before everything else and delight in applying this ruthlessly, and that this has earned business its deserved reputation for having an interest only in the bottom line. Others, such as Stitzer, may have some qualms about what they are doing, but do it all the same.

Then there was the case of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital Trust which was tricked by a consortium which had

contracted to build a new hospital for them. The "re-financing" deal was exposed by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, whose (Tory) chairman, Edward Leigh, called it . . . "the unacceptable face of capitalism".

What happened was that, after the hospital had been built, the consortium Octagon was able to obtain better financial conditions for the money it had borrowed to build the hospital. An extra £116 million was raised which, according to the (Tory) MP for Norwich South, Richard Bacon, was used "not to build more wards or a new cardiac unit. The sole purpose of this extra borrowing was to speed up the rate of return to investors" (Times, 3 May).

Octagon had done nothing illegal. They had merely used their financial expertise to get a favourable deal for their shareholders at the expense of a hospital trust inexperienced in such matters. It happens all the time. In fact, such wheeling and dealing is virtually all that goes on in the City of London where not an ounce of wealth is created, but where financial capitalists try to trick each other - and any inexperienced suckers they come across - out of what has been produced by the working class.



The Equality Act, which came into force earlier this year, covers discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender, disability and race. Yet it illustrates the point that government legislation cannot in itself change people's attitudes.

Prejudice and Equality

Knowing the history or etymology of a word does not always tell anything about its current usage or meaning. *Silly*, for instance, used to mean 'blessed', but that is just irrelevant to the way it is used now. Sometimes, however, a word's origin or structure can be quite revealing. *Prejudice*, for instance, means 'pre-judge': to form an opinion about a person or idea or thing in advance without the benefit of a proper understanding.

A prejudice may well involve categorising someone in a particular way, perhaps just because of their appearance: they may be black, Jewish, female, gay, shifty-looking, 'foreign', or whatever. They may be wearing clothing which suggests that they are a Muslim, or a shirt of a football team you dislike, or just a hoodie. Or you may hear them say a few words and decide that you don't think much of their accent. In all these cases, a person is being judged - and perhaps dismissed or ignored - by being seen as a member of some group of people, rather than as an individual. Such a prejudice might be justified by saying that 'they' are all lazy or untrustworthy or potential terrorists, or just not the sort of person you want to be in any way associated with. Stereotyping along these lines is one of the foundations of prejudice and bias.

Ideas like racism and sexism are not respectable these days, and most people will deny being prejudiced - if you think you aren't, try the online test at <http://www.understandingprejudice.org/iat/>.

Prejudice may be merely a matter of dislike, but when it influences the way you behave and leads to some disadvantage for

the other person, then that's discrimination. Someone may be denied a job for reasons quite unrelated to their ability to do it, or they may be refused service in a shop, or made to wait in a queue. And there are far worse things, too, such as racist murders or

“Many Christians have objected that they can no longer ban 'undesirables' from their premises”

attacks on anyone who belongs (or appears to belong) to some demonised group.

Capitalism is full of examples of prejudice and discrimination. Gender and race have been the most obvious examples, with women being confined to the home, earning lower wages than men, having fewer educational opportunities, being subjected to domestic abuse, and so on. People with dark skins have been treated as less than human, enslaved, confined to the worst housing and worst jobs, lynched and brutalised. The Nazi onslaught on Jews and many other groups, such as Slavs and Roma, is probably the most notorious and despicable example.

Where there is a problem, capitalism often sees the chance of a reform, designed to alleviate some of the worst excesses and make it look as if the system and those who

run it care about the most downtrodden. So there is now plenty of legislation against discrimination. For instance, the Equality Act, which came into force earlier this year, covers discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender, disability and race. Yet it illustrates the point that government legislation cannot in itself change people's attitudes. Many Christians who run bed-and-breakfast establishments have objected that they can no longer ban 'undesirables' from their premises: gays, satanists, Muslims, even other brands of Christian - all may be viewed as not the right kind of person (*Observer* 26 March).

But it's not just a matter of likes and dislikes. So often prejudice and discrimination under capitalism can be traced back to competition, for jobs, houses or government handouts. If 'they' come over here and take jobs that belong to white workers, then unemployment among whites could be reduced or eliminated by sending 'them' back or at least by putting them at the end of the line for jobs. The housing problem would surely be far less serious if 'they' were not allowed to jump the queue for council houses. Some group of people can be selected as scapegoats who are blamed for all the ills of society: unemployment, homelessness, crime, violence, insecurity, poverty. Tragically, workers who suffer from these problems will often put the blame onto fellow workers, who in fact may well be even worse off than they are.

Not all prejudice can be said to be caused by competition. Religious bigots, such as the christian B&B owners, can

introduce their own forms of intolerance, backed up by nothing more than a dislike of anybody who is in some way different from themselves. And ideas can change, however slowly. Gays and lesbians, for instance, rarely have to keep their sexuality secret nowadays (though in plenty of countries this is not the case). Discrimination against disabled people is far less widespread than it once was. But of course, nobody could pretend that racist ideas are a thing of the past.

And there is one form of discrimination that cannot disappear under capitalism, because it is built in to the system's very bones. This is discrimination on the grounds of wealth and power: a relatively small number of people have a great deal of both, while the vast majority (the working class) have little of either. It's only workers who have to worry about discrimination in terms of jobs and housing: if you live off profits and have several luxury apartments and a country mansion, then you hardly need to worry about not being 'one of us'. Equalising pension arrangements for men and women doesn't affect you if you're a millionaire whose post-'retirement' standard of living will barely take a cut.

The Socialist Party's Declaration of Principles claims that a Socialist society will involve 'the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex'. In a world where competition for housing and jobs is no more, where all take an equal part in producing for need and running society democratically, it will be absurd to suggest that any kind of prejudice could still exist. Maybe we will still form first impressions of a person we meet, but that will be based on their own character and behaviour, not on lumping them in with some ill-defined grouping. Being a Socialist implies opposition to all kinds of prejudice and a determination to treat people as equals and as individuals. ■

PAUL BENNETT

Business invades education



There has never been a time in capitalism when the two worlds of business and education have not had some kind of relationship with each other. Since the early years of the Industrial Revolution business owners have wanted - and given money to promote - the education of children up to a standard that will enable them to become efficient and profitable employees.

Today, however, the influence of business interests on education has gone much further. Business people, and those in the media who promote their interests, have become much more assertive in the role they see business playing in education. Government policies, such as those driving the new city academies, are designed to strengthen the link between what goes on in educational institutions and what goes on in workplaces.

Popular language plays a part in all this. "Enterprise" has become an over-worked cliché. It is seen as a good word

because it is linked with energy, using one's initiative, setting something up. It is youthful, can be satisfying, even dramatic in an otherwise somewhat dull and routine world.

Capitalist values have a secure foothold in the later stages of education such as sixth forms, colleges of further and higher education. As a contributor to the Business Daily programme of the BBC World Service remarked (28 April), "Business people actually teach the courses."

There are also moves to get even young children interested in "enterprise". You're never too young to learn about buying and selling and making a profit (don't think about exploitation - just experience it when you grow up).

The question of whether young entrepreneurs come from entrepreneurial families of not seems to be unresolved. What is not in doubt is the rarity of successful entrepreneurs. A youngster may feature in the media by boasting about making a million or so from finding a gap in the market at the age of perhaps 12 or 13. But the sobering fact is that 80 percent of new businesses fail within two years.

Some of the winning entrepreneurs make a point of saying that it isn't so much the money that they find satisfying but the sense of achievement and meeting a need. Fine. The most enterprising thing we can do is to work to replace a system of gross inequality, deprivation and destruction with one in which meeting human need is at the top of the agenda. ■

STAN PARKER

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The sun goddess Amaterasu

Japan: A woman for Emperor?

No male heir born in 40 years sparks a debate about bringing "gender equality" to the Japanese monarchy. What is the role of the Japanese monarchy? Would a female monarch be a step forward?

Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi is an unlikely advocate of women's rights. But earlier this year the well-coiffed leader was keen to promote gender equality. Not for all women, mind you, or even a few, but rather a four-year-old girl known as Her Imperial Highness Princess Aiko. He supported an effort to revise the Imperial House Law that would allow her to "ascend" to the throne one day. Why this concern for the plight of royal women? Well, the fact that no male heir has been born for the past 40 years might just have something to do with it. Unless something is done, or a prince is born, the monarchy faces the prospect of withering away.

Koizumi responded to the succession crisis by setting up an advisory council in late 2004, which issued a report recommending that women and their descendants be granted the right of succession. The proposal had strong public backing and seemed uncontroversial, this being the 21st century. So it came as a surprise when right-wingers mobilized to oppose the reform. Considering that the reform was intended to save-not abolish-the monarchy, it seems strange that these "traditionalists" (to use a charitable term) are dead-set against it. But there is a certain logic that underlies their stance.

Some commentators have explained the fierce opposition to the reform as stemming from sexism, pure and simple. In a February 23 *Asia Times* article, J. Sean Curtis argued that the opposition to the reform, which he views as "a significant leap forward" for gender equality in Japan, "exposes the deep-seated anti-female bias at the heart of the Japanese establishment." Certainly, those opposed to the reform are sexists. But in this case their motivation is not merely to keep women in their place, but to keep all Japanese workers in their place.

Above all, they treasure the monarchy as a valuable means of fostering nationalism. Their concern, often explicitly stated, is that casually throwing away one long-held dogma could threaten the entire ideology surrounding the "imperial household." Suddenly admitting the triviality of male lineage, after harping on its importance for centuries, could raise other doubts, including the question of why a monarchy is even necessary. Monarchy enthusiasts found it

"Here we have *Mein Kampf* in reverse, with an "Aryan" peeing in the sacred gene pool"

hard enough to accept the idea that the emperor is *not* a deity, which Emperor Hirohito admitted in 1946. And some still haven't let go of this idea, as reflected in Prime Minister Mori's comment, in 2000, that "Japan is a divine nation, with the Emperor at its center." Today, they are unwilling to make further sacrifices.

In particular, the traditionalists cling to the notion of an unbroken "eternal" line of succession on the paternal side stretching back 2,666 years. Starting on February 11, 660 B.C., to be exact. This "bloodline" is said to be the longest in the world and the very *essence* of Japan. Perhaps psychology can account for the odd fixation on length, but there is also a social explanation. The idea of continuity is comforting to the rulers of Japan. They have a vital interest in convincing workers that class-divisions will always exist-as symbolized by a distinction between royals and commoners. At the

same time, almost conversely, the monarchy conveys the idea that all Japanese are part of a family headed by the emperor that transcends class. Of course, the "facts" mobilized to support this comforting and useful notion are not so convincing.

First of all, outside of Nazi scientific circles, anyone who harps on the importance of blood in relation to genealogy, not to mention its purity, is regarded as a fool. Even if "blood" is a synonym here for DNA, considering that every child is the product of a man's sperm and woman's egg, it is hard to see why the male side of this equation should be fixated on.

Turning from biology to history, the claims of the traditionalists hold up no better. The figure of 2,666 years is based on the first recorded histories of Japan, *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) and *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicles of Japan). Both texts are a mixture of myth and historical fact, written in the early eighth century at the behest of the imperial family to boost its prestige. Given this patronage, it is not surprising that the authors were prone to exaggeration. Not only is the length of the imperial line stretched out considerably, but the origin of the Japanese monarchy is actually traced back to a sun goddess named Amaterasu. Those who rely on facts, rather than historical fiction, generally think that the first "emperor" (*tenno*) appeared some time around 400 AD. Unfortunately, carrying out such archeological research in Japan is impeded at every step by the Imperial Household Agency, which restricts access to tombs and artifacts.

The first emperors, whenever they existed, were hardly social types unique to Japan. Similar despots emerged throughout the world, as an early manifestation of class divisions. (In fact, there is speculation that the imperial family is of Korean origin.) And if older is better, as jingoists in Japan insist, they would have to bow down to



From left: Imperial Highness Princess Aiko; Emperor Hirohito; Prime Minister Mori; Prime Minister Koizumi

lands where these religious/political leaders scratched and crawled their way to the top many centuries earlier. Granted, as our jin-goists would surely point out, the Japanese monarchy stretches all the way to the present. But this is only because the emperor was grafted on to subsequent modes of production, whereas despots in other lands often had the good grace to exit the historical stage after playing their roles. The name *tenno* may remain-although even it was only coined in the eighth century-but the person bearing this title has been shaped by the times, tossed back and forth by the tides of history no less than the "commoners."

Traditionalists speak of the imperial family as the core of the Japanese nation, but apart from the early centuries of real power, emperors have functioned primarily as figureheads. During the feudal Edo Period, for example, it was the Tokugawa clan, based in Edo (Tokyo) that ruled over a network of fiefdoms, while the Emperor rusticated in Kyoto. Some have argued that the 1868 "Meiji Restoration" (capitalist revolution) marked the emperor's return to real power, but despite the emperor taking on new ideological significance under capitalism, his role has remained primarily symbolic; first as a unifying symbol wielded by the revolution's leaders to forge a modern nation-state, and later as a bulwark against calls for greater democracy and as a tool to mobilize workers to fight imperialist wars. Even if we accept the argument that some emperors, most notably Emperor Hirohito, played an active political role, this does not deny that the ruling class *as a whole* utilized the emperor as a useful ideological tool.

Since the light of such historical facts erodes their cherished myths, the traditionalists' campaign against the reform has relied heavily on scare tactics. The rank-and-file have been told that a female emperor would be more susceptible to manipulation by politicians or that "Japanese culture" is incompatible with a man playing second-fiddle to his empress wife. And their Japanese blood really boiled when former trade minister Takeo Hiranamu depicted a nightmare scenario, in which Princess Aiko becomes the reigning empress, "gets involved with a blue-eyed foreigner while studying abroad and marries him" so that their child becomes the emperor. Here we have *Mein Kampf* in reverse, with an "Aryan" peeing in the sacred gene pool.

Most of their energy was focused on attacking the reform, but the traditionalists

did manage to offer a few solutions as well. One was to swell the ranks of royal welfare recipients by reviving the status of royals who were stripped of their titles after the war. The emperor's cousin, Prince Tomohito, offered a more cost-effective solution. Quite unburdened by new-fangled notions of equality, he suggested the reintroduction of concubines, whose wombs could service the needs of crown prince and nation alike.

But before other solutions could be offered, the debate suddenly came to a halt in February. Whether they realized it or not, the opponents of reform had an ace up their sleeve in the emperor's mustachioed second son, Prince Akashino. While the debate was raging, he set aside his research on catfish (I'm not joking!), to attend to a vital matter with his wife, Princess Kiko. The royal couple, already parents of two teenage daughters, announced that a third child is due in September. This revelation immediately silenced talk of reform-although the birth of another girl might rekindle interest in gender equality.

Compared to the insincere reformists, the traditionalists are refreshingly principled. They have little use for equality in general, not to mention gender equality, and do not conceal this fact. This is reflected in other efforts they are making to mold society, all supported by Koizumi, such as: revising the history textbooks so children "feel good" about Japan, forcing schools to display the national flag and students and teachers to sing the national anthem, encouraging politicians to visit the war-glorifying Yasukuni Shrine, or revising the Constitution to cut out the bits about democracy and human rights. Their message is simple: "Obey!" Although it remains to be seen whether this prewar template of nationalism, centered on the emperor, will be effective.

We have looked at unprincipled "reformists" and block-headed traditionalists, but what are we to make of those who *genuinely* saw the reform as a step, or even a leap, forward for gender equality? Can an institution based upon inequality become a beacon for equality between men and women?

Just posing this question highlights its absurdity. But more importantly, this view of an empress as a positive role model implies that achieving gender equality is primarily a matter of changing people's way of thinking. This ignores the relation between the social system (capitalism) and

the way people think and act. The continued existence of discrimination against women throughout the world suggests that there is such a relation. There is not space here to fully explain this, but in part gender discrimination stems from the general interest of capitalists to divide the working class, and the tendency of employers to hire a man over a woman if childbirth or raising a child might interfere with work.

To be fair, capitalism has contributed to gender equality by bringing large numbers of women into the workforce, to be exploited along with their male coworkers. And states are willing to introduce legislation to protect women's rights when gender discrimination *itself* negatively affects the smooth functioning of the profit-making system. In Japan, for example, there is alarm over the extremely low birth rate. Unless the state opens the doors to foreign workers, which it is reluctant to do, it may have no choice but to improve working conditions so more women can continue working after childbirth. If this does occur liberals will be ready to supply the flowery rhetoric, but the fact remains that the state would be acting in the common interests of capitalists, not because their "way of thinking" suddenly changed. It is also worth remembering that the state *giveth*, and if conditions change, the state will gladly *takeeth* away (or at least curtail) any right - whether it be health-care and pension benefits, shorter working hours, or women's rights.

And even *if* capitalism could be reformed to eliminate gender discrimination forever, we would still be left with the inequities of this system. Capitalist equality is limited to the relation between buyers and sellers of commodities. Workers, as the sellers of labor-power, are also granted this right (although few commodity owners are swindled so regularly). This marketplace equality, however, conceals inequality within production, where workers have no choice but to work under, and enrich, the owners of the means of production (capitalists). Under this system, gender equality is nothing more equality between men and women as wage slaves. And even this remains an unfulfilled dream.

Socialists are serious about achieving equality-between men and women, and between *all* human beings-and recognize that true equality can only be achieved when humanity bids farewell to capitalism. ■
MS

An economist who remained loyal to the end to the discredited view that government intervention can make capitalism work in the interest of the majority.

John Kenneth ('J.K.') Galbraith, who has died at the age of 97, was probably - after John Maynard Keynes and Milton Friedman - the most famous economist of the twentieth century. For decades he argued against the dominance of the free market economy in favour of a reformed and humanised capitalism which could be made more equitable and tolerable by government intervention.

A Canadian by birth, he became part of a group of Keynesian supporters at Harvard University in the US that included Paul Samuelson and James Tobin. Galbraith's career at Harvard led him to become Professor of Economics and something of a radical disciple of the Keynesian belief that poverty and inequality in capitalism - and the related phenomenon of the boom and slump trade cycle - could be reformed away by well-informed and -intentioned governments. From the 1950s onwards he was to write a number of books, all penned in a popular and readable style, which challenged popular misconceptions about society and the economy. In particular, his books *The Great Crash: 1929* (1955), *The Affluent Society* (1958), *The New Industrial State* (1967), *Economics and the Public Purpose* (1974) and *The Nature of Mass Poverty* (1979) established him as a leading commentator on developments within the capitalist economy and a critic of many prevailing orthodoxies.

Galbraith liked to see himself as a rebel and an outsider, which was true up to a point. For a short time in the early 1960s, though, he served as the US Ambassador to India under John F. Kennedy, and was later an advisor to L.B. Johnson and other Western politicians (including, in a critical and somewhat ad hoc capacity, current UK Chancellor Gordon Brown). His pre-occupations were with aspects of the capitalist system that critical thinkers found most dysfunctional: its tendency to promote economic growth (in terms of capital accumulation) at all costs; its inability to address profound issues of wealth inequality; and the tendency for the concentration of capital and the growth of monopoly, in particular, to undermine the more idealistic free market notions of 'consumer sovereignty' within capitalism.

Crises and slumps

Arguably Galbraith's finest work was his historical account - and critique - of the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the subsequent prolonged trade depression. In many respects, his work serves as a warning to those who feel that capitalism naturally tends towards an equilibrium state of rising productivity and steady growth. What Galbraith detailed was the circumstances in which arguably the greatest trade depression the world has ever known came to develop and cause such widespread misery.

Although Galbraith over-emphasised the actions of the US government and the

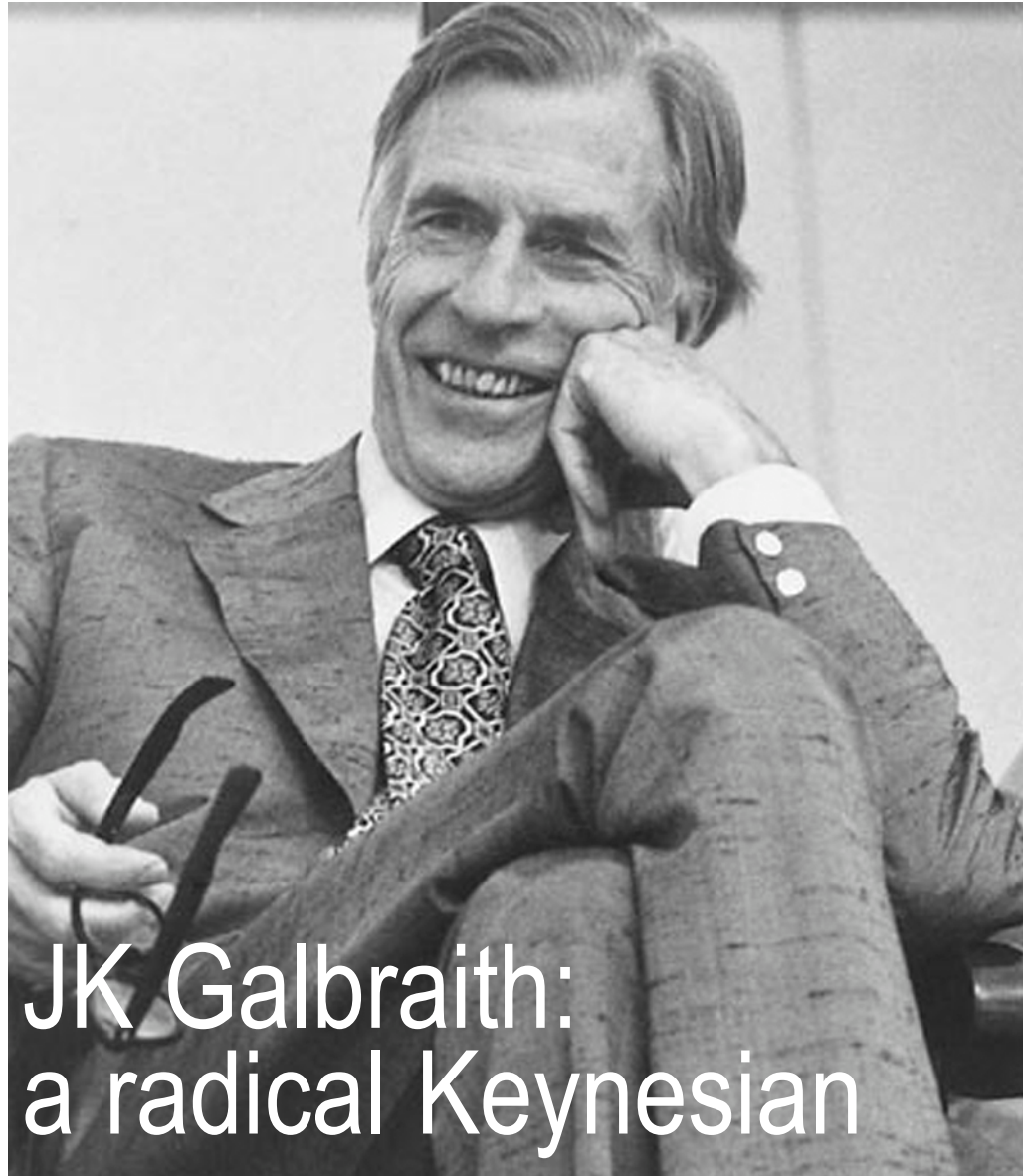
Federal Reserve banks, his underlying assessment of the crash was a sound one. He argued that it was caused in large part by the market-driven over-expansion of the producer goods sector of the economy (the sector producing factory machinery, steel, etc for industry) in comparison to the consumer goods sector during the preceding boom years. This had meant in practice that in the competitive drive to accumulate capital, profits were re-invested to expand productive capacity at a disproportionate rate: far more so than was justified given the fall at the time in the share of wages and salaries in National Income. It was this over-expansion of the producer goods sector which led to the production of consumer goods in excess of available market demand and the subsequent downturn in the economy.

Galbraith was affected quite profoundly at an intellectual level by the 1930s slump, as were many others who became attracted to Keynesian economics. Indeed, Galbraith was at the forefront of those who ridiculed the view that, if left to its own devices, the capitalist market economy would naturally tend towards an equilibrium state of steady growth and full employment and that it was somehow government intervention that prevented markets from working properly. Galbraith's view, which he was to explore in different respects in his published books, was just the opposite.

For Galbraith, the 'classical' economists and the so-called monetarists who resurrected some of their views from the 1970s onwards posited an idealised version of the market economy that was as over-simplified

as it was driven by a defence of privilege. Galbraith wittily deconstructed many of the economic models on which it rested, highlighting issues such as monopoly, price-fixing, imperfect information and the various possible influences exerted not just by abstract 'producers' and 'consumers' but by advertisers, suppliers and trade unions too. In the days before corporate scandals such as Enron, he recognised that corporations do not always carry on their activities for the benefit of investors like shareholders, and that the natural growth of large corporations within capitalism sometimes led to practices within organisations which were designed to benefit those who internally controlled them first and foremost.

In many respects, it was in his critique of wider capitalist society that Galbraith was on his strongest ground, recognising imperfections in the system that others willed away. One of his most famous remarks was that "the modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest ever exercises in moral philosophy; that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness". His withering critique of Arthur Laffer's theory of how lowering income tax on the rich would increase government revenue, and of the illusory benefits of 'trickle down economics' was a prime example. And in arguably his most famous work, *The Affluent Society*, he took up a critique of the way in which capitalist enterprises try to ensure their expansion by manufacturing artificial 'wants' through advertising and other means. While this owed something to an earlier analysis by Thorstein Veblen, it was nevertheless



JK Galbraith: a radical Keynesian

considered subversive and hotly disputed at the time.

Keynesian economics

Whatever insights Galbraith developed into the workings of capitalism and despite his attacks on its most vigorous defenders, he was hampered by two key, related aspects of his approach. First, his unremitting adherence to Keynesian economic theory and second, his inability to be able to countenance anything that went beyond a reform of capitalism.

Galbraith's view was that where capitalism failed (and he acknowledged that it failed frequently) it was the duty of governments and the 'public sector' generally to step in, whether in terms of economic management, regulatory frameworks for corporations, or measures designed to assist the 'underclass' of unemployed and unemployables. A consistent thread in all his writings was an overly-optimistic and exaggerated view of the ways in which capitalism can be reformed so as take power and wealth away from the rich and give it to the poor. His views on this had been influenced by his experiences as an economist and civil servant in the wartime Roosevelt administration. Then he had been put in charge of price controls in a period where, due to the central direction needed because of the war effort, the US was the nearest it has ever come to having a 'command' style economy. As unemployment and inflation were both low at the time, Galbraith saw this as confirmation of the powers Keynesian 'demand management' techniques possessed in dealing with the inefficiency and inequality of unfettered capitalism.

When the economy returned to 'normal' in the decades after the war, the supposed benefits of the Keynesian approach soon proved elusive, not just in the US but in other countries too where his advice was sought. And even when the radical Keynesian approach was given explicit government backing and was implemented with some enthusiasm (on the grounds that the patient hadn't previously been receiving a

high enough dosage of the medicine), the results were not encouraging. This was the case across much of Western Europe as well as the US, where prices began to rise alongside increased unemployment.

One of the most notable examples of radical Keynesian failure was in the UK, where in the first two to three years of the Labour government of 1974-9, state regulatory measures generally were increased, a prices and incomes policy was instituted, state borrowing rose to pay for increased government capital expenditure, and the tax system was restructured to disproportionately hit those on the highest incomes. But the result was a near doubling of unemployment and annual price rises at nearly 27 per cent (the latter mainly caused by an over-issue of paper currency not convertible into gold, which became the ubiquitous outcome of the type of lax monetary policy favoured by radical Keynesians).

In this respect, Galbraith is likely to be remembered as an economist who was far more adept at criticising the indefensible than he was at promoting a workable alternative to it. Indeed, it was precisely the failure of his type of Keynesian approach which heralded the return from the 1970s onwards of the free market economic orthodoxy he detested, championed by his sparring partners like Milton Friedman.

Missed opportunity

Unfortunately, the political economist who had a rounded explanation of why the free market does not work, and whose theories indicated why reform of capitalism in the guise of Keynesian economics would be no more successful, was not someone Galbraith was ever attracted towards or studied really seriously: Karl Marx. While Galbraith was capable of making pithy and apposite comments about the Soviet Union - "under capitalism, man exploits man. Under communism, it's just the opposite" - he never seemed to get too far past the popular prejudice against Marx existing in much of US academia. That so-called 'Russian communism' was in reality an extensive and dictato-

rial form of the type of planned state-run capitalism that he otherwise had a penchant for, in particular seemed to escape him.

In the rather lazy fashion of other American academics he was wont to attribute to Marx views which were distorted interpretations of his theories, such as that capitalism would somehow collapse because of the long-run tendency of the rate of profit to fall, or that the working class in capitalism was condemned to endure conditions of ever increasing misery. This was a shame, because although capitalism is so complex and anarchic that no one individual can attain a perfect insight into it, Marx came a lot nearer than most. The great body of his work still stands the test of time, and far more so than that of either the apologists for the free market or Keynesian interventionists like Galbraith himself.

While Galbraith thought that certain types of capitalism (particularly free-market capitalism) were highly problematic, Marx took a rather different view. This was that it was capitalism *itself* that was the problem because it was fundamentally based on the pursuit of profit before human needs, was at root anarchic and uncontrollable, and was characterised by class division and an antagonistic system of income distribution that could not be planned or wished away.

It is interesting to look back on the 97 years of Galbraith's life, and to reflect on the capitalist trade cycle, inflation, the concentration of capital, the nature of commodity production and much more that he addressed. Marx provided a framework that could successfully account for these phenomena while at the same time demonstrating why capitalism can never be reformed so as to run in the interests of the vast majority of its inhabitants. These were insights that Galbraith flirted with but no more, and this was to the detriment of his otherwise urbane and pithy analysis, and most certainly to the detriment of those who lived under the governments he advised. ■

DAP



Cooking the Books (2)

Towards an economic crash?

"Imbalances 'pose risk of recession'" ran a headline in the *Times* on

28 April. The US has a "huge" balance of payments deficit "heading for 7 percent of national income this year", explained another article. "In turn, Asia has built up vast current account surpluses and foreign exchange reserves".

The balance of payments is basically the balance between payments coming into a country from the sale abroad of its exports (visible and invisible) and payments going out to pay for its imports (visible and invisible). A deficit exists when imports exceed exports. To pay for exports from the country, dealers in other countries have to acquire the country's currency while importers into the country have to acquire foreign currency. If a country has a balance of payments deficit, the demand for its currency will be less than that for foreign currencies, so its currency

will tend to fall in value (whether through formal devaluation or through floating downwards). The opposite will be the case for a country with a balance of payments surplus; the value of its currency will tend to rise.

Given the US payments deficit and the Asian countries' surplus, what would normally happen is that the dollar would fall and the Asian currencies rise in value. That this has not happened yet to any great extent is because the countries involved find the present situation to be in their interest. The Asian countries, especially China, with their undervalued currencies benefit from being able to export more (because the price of their exports is lower than it would normally be, making them more competitive), while the US benefits from the Asian countries using part of their surpluses to fund the US government by lending it money (through purchasing its Treasury Bills).

There is a general recognition in international capitalist circles that this situation cannot continue indefinitely - that, sooner or later, in one way or another, the exchange rate adjustments must take place. The big question is how. The ideal solution of "a relatively stable adjustment", according to Mervyn King, the Governor of the Bank of

England appearing before the House of Commons Treasury Committee, would be for this to "happen gradually over ten years in fits and starts".

But he went on to outline another possible scenario:

"You can certainly imagine cases where the sharp fall in exchange rates could well lead to a fall-off in financial stability, and start to lead to a disorderly adjustment which could be very costly and might involve recessions in some countries".

Some critics of capitalism are arguing that this is what is inevitably going to happen (for instance, Loren Goldner in an article at <http://home.earthlink.net/~lrgoldner/blowout.html> predicting an "inflationary blow-out"). This is certainly a possibility, as King admits. But it is not inevitable. King's other scenario for a "relatively stable adjustment" is also a possibility.

Monetary matters are the froth and bubbles on the real economy. Even so, mismanaging them can provoke an economic crash that might not otherwise occur. But mismanagement is not inevitable. Slumps are only inevitable when caused by movements in the real economy.

Graham Harvey: *We Want Real Food*. Constable £9.99.



Criticisms of food production usually concentrate on the supermarkets: with their emphasis on selling homogeneous produce and driving down the prices they pay to the producers, they play a major role in depriving consumers of healthy and tasty food.

The fast-food industry is also attacked for its bland tasteless pap. In this book, though, Graham Harvey points the finger of blame at the companies that produce artificial fertilisers.

It is true that life expectancy is far greater than it used to be and that diseases like TB and cholera are almost things of the past in Britain. But degenerative diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and arthritis are reaching epidemic proportions. Harvey ascribes this to a change in the make-up of the soil, owing to the increased use of nitrogen compounds in fertiliser, which itself has been pushed by the companies who make big profits from selling the stuff. Traditional farming exploited the minerals in the soil that contributed to a healthy lifestyle, but modern methods have relied more and more on chemical fertilisers that destroy these nutrients. According to one study, for instance, carrots lost 75 percent of their magnesium and copper between 1941 and 1990. Minerals have various roles in protecting and promoting human health: copper, for instance, is important for the functioning of the liver, brain and muscles, while selenium protects against the onset of a number of kinds of cancer.

Harvey's solution is a programme to reintroduce these crucial minerals to the soil. But this will face a problem: "For the best part of half a century, the chemical industry has effectively vetoed every attempt to re-mineralize over-worked soils and restore the health benefits to everyday foods." So "What's needed is leadership - from farmers, retailers or politicians." Effective government legislation could supposedly promote sensible agriculture and hence healthier and tastier food. But food production would still be at the mercy of the profit motive rather than be aimed at satisfying human need. Assuming that Harvey's science is on the right lines, he makes a convincing case for changing the way in which agriculture is organised, but the problem is that this cannot be divorced from how society as a whole is run.

His website at <http://www.wewantreal-food.co.uk/> is also of interest, though we wouldn't recommend bothering to write to supermarkets asking them to change their ways.

PB

Say What You Mean

Steven Poole: *Unspeak*. Little, Brown £9.99.

Which word would best describe those who use violence to oppose the US-UK occupation of Iraq? 'Terrorists' is condemnatory, while 'resistance' (with its echoes of those who opposed Nazi occupation in Europe)

may register approval. Perhaps the most neutral term is 'insurgents'. This is one of the examples that Steven Poole uses to show that choice of words is important, that the labels attached to people or ideas can affect attitudes towards them.

Socialists are well aware of this, of course, the very word 'Socialism' having been dragged through the mud of dictatorship and Labour Party politics. But Poole does have some instructive examples to discuss. For instance, Republicans in the US have been advised to talk about 'climate change', rather than 'global warming', on the grounds that the former is less frightening. The UN General Assembly had in fact already used the euphemism of climate change, which does not specify in which direction the change is proceeding, under pressure from Saudi Arabia and the US, both of which have interest in playing down the effects of burning fossil fuels. Equally, 'genetically engineered' has often been replaced by cosier-sounding terms such as 'genetically modified' (usually shortened to 'GM'), 'genetically enhanced' and 'biotechnology foods'. And 'ethnic cleansing' sounds so much less nasty than the straightforward 'genocide'.

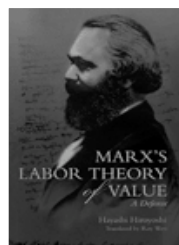
In the mealy-mouthed platitudes of capitalism's apologists, even military operations have to be given nice-looking names. Hence Operation Enduring Freedom (US invasion of Afghanistan) and Operation Just Cause (the invasion of Panama in 1989). The invasion of Iraq was going to be called Operation Iraqi Liberation, till someone realised that the initials spelled OIL! The 'war on terror' is another snappy phrase, one which Poole regards as absurd because you can't have a war against a tactic or technique.

And this 'war' has itself given rise to a great many mendacious expressions. Think of 'extraordinary rendition', which refers to transporting supposed enemies to countries where they will be tortured: 'rendering' is a word used in industrial meat-processing, so perhaps the phrase is not so inaccurate after all. 'Sleep management' is what is more honestly known as 'sleep deprivation'. And 'abuse' is used in place of the taboo word 'torture', so that the government responsible for torturing prisoners can take refuge in the position that it's really only subjecting them to abuse.

It needs to be said that the reality of capitalism and its works is what's really objectionable, not the names that smell of roses but cover up the filth beneath. Socialists have always called a spade a spade, not being frightened to expose capitalism and the capitalist class. But Poole's book is a useful reminder of some of the ways in which defenders of the status quo go about their business

PB

Marx's Labor Theory of Value. A Defense. By Hyashi Hiroyoshi. Universe. 2005. \$26.95



It has always been our contention that it is the workings of capitalism, with the problems it causes those obliged to work for a wage or a salary for a living, that throws up socialist ideas and not just the educational and propa-

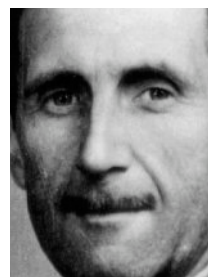
gandistic activities of those workers who have already become socialists. This book is a confirmation of this

Written by a member of a group that emerged from the student wing of the Japanese Communist Party in the late 50s and early 60s, it makes the point that money and value will disappear in a socialist society because production will no longer be carried out by independent economic units (whether individual owners, capitalist corporations or state enterprises) and will no longer be for sale on the market. It also expounds the view that the Russian revolution was not a "socialist" or "proletarian" revolution and that the regime it established was never socialist, but state capitalist from the start as, given the historical circumstances, capitalism was the only possible development.

As a book put together from articles written at different times, it suffers from a lack of flow, and some of the polemics in the earlier part of the book about the nature of value are obscure, being directed at authors not known in this part of the world even if well-known in Japan. This said, there are useful discussions in later chapters on Adam Smith, the parts of Volume III of *Capital* devoted to interest, credit and rent, and on the two different definitions of "productive labour" to be found in Marx's writings.

ALB

The Social and Political Thought of George Orwell: A reassessment. By Stephen Ingle. Routledge. 2006. £65 (hardback)



Despite the title this is more a work of literary criticism than political theory. But since Orwell wrote mainly on political and social subjects the two are intertwined.

Orwell considered himself a socialist and was briefly a member of the ILP in 1938. Later, he wrote for the leftwing weekly *Tribune* and was a declared supporter of the post-war Labour government. In fact one of the issues Ingle discusses is whether Orwell should be described as a "Trotskyite" or as a "Tribunite". He opts for a third choice: "ethical socialist".

Although we wouldn't regard him as a socialist in our sense, he was always clear, at a time when few others besides ourselves were arguing this, that Russia had nothing to do with socialism. Which was why the Russia-lovers called him a "Trotskyite" and why his fear of being assassinated was not entirely groundless.

Two of Orwell's works in particular have been appreciated by socialists. *Homage to Catalonia*, an account of events in Barcelona in 1936 and 1937 when workers took over the running of the city and the subsequent suppression of this by the so-called "Communists". And *Animal Farm*, a brilliant satire on Bolshevism (including Trotskyism).

The main book for which Orwell is known is *Nineteen Eighty Four*. This paints a horrifying picture of a world in which the evolution towards a totalitarian state-capitalism (which, in the 1940s, many to the left of the Communist Party thought was under way) has been completed. It was mainly

Continued on Page 18

Modern Times

Modernism 1914-1939: Designing a New World, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, until 23rd July, £9 adults.



This is an engaging, varied and well structured exhibition put together by the V & A, focusing on 'modernist' approaches to architecture, art and the application of science between the wars. The exhibits, ranging from paintings and posters, through to recreated designs and excerpts from film shows like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (above) and Chaplin's *Modern Times*, are suitably and accurately described throughout, generally being set in an appropriate theoretical context.

Although modernism was a varied and dynamic movement, its central themes were an important part of early twentieth century life. In particular, the search for human improvement (if not perfectibility) through the application of the scientific method, rationalist approaches to problem solving and the consideration for human progress that permeated art and architecture, were important milestones in the history of capitalism. With modernism, they probably reached their fullest expression so far.

Some sections examine the link between modernism and concepts of social and political utopia, particularly those emanating from the workers' movement, and others invite consideration of how authoritarian regimes in Russia, Germany and Italy either enthusiastically used - or reticently accommodated themselves to - modernist precepts.

The work of modernist artists such as Mondrian and architects such as Le Corbusier are stunning and prominently featured, along with subsequent applications of their work. Indeed, it is evident (and telling) just how often the design innovations and imaginative approaches of such individuals were limited or distorted by a social and economic system with its own imperatives and strictures, from giant 'social housing' projects to the commercialisation of art.

Not everything that came out of modernism was commendable by any means - the 'Taylorism' of the modernist factory production line being a particularly mixed blessing. But it is interesting to imagine how a socialist society - which could have been far more closely aligned to the general modernist approach - might have utilised

and applied modernist ideas and techniques for the benefit of humanity. In fact, it is difficult for a socialist to take a tour of the exhibition without thinking this at almost every turn.

By the early twentieth century, the capitalist system had developed a world-wide division of labour and sufficient productive capacity for a socialist society built on abundance to be viable as a possible alternative to it. In this sense, capitalism had become politically obsolete. But at a social and technological level, modernism in this period represented both the struggle to transcend and improve capitalism at the same time, to ensure that forward-thinking, scientific and structured methods were applied for the improvement of society. In the absence of socialist revolution, this took the form (even if by default) of trying to renew or perfect commodity society for the perceived needs of humanity.

In many respects, this represented the apogee of conscious, coherent planning and scientific application within capitalism. Thereafter, it influenced post-war reconstruction before being buried by the eclecticism, anti-rationalism and general scepticism towards grand projects for human advancement typified by the anti-scientific backlash of 'postmodernism'. Today, postmodernism represents the incoherence and chaos of a capitalist society that has spurned systematic attempts at social improvement, being a product of the commodification and isolation of everyday life, with the attendant breakdown of social relationships and coherence this has involved.

For all its faults, modernism represented a hope for a brighter future through the search for collective human improvement by scientific, rationalist methods and planning. In rejecting this, postmodernism has since confirmed capitalism's inability to progress in a sustained and coherent manner, and is symbolic of its general descent into impotent micro-politics, disorder and the intellectual void.

DAP

East Anglia

Saturday, **24 June**, 12 noon to 4pm

12 noon: Informal chat.

1pm: Meal.

2pm to 4pm: Showing of video "Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff" followed by discussion.

The Conservatory, back room of Rosary Tavern, Rosary Rd, Norwich.

Central London

Saturday, **24 June**, 3pm

GLOBALISATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Speaker: Brian Johnson

Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 (nearest tube: Clapham North).

Manchester

Monday **26 June**, 8 pm

GLOBALISATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Speaker: Brian Johnson

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City centre.

Socialist Walk: a Thames tour of Rotherhithe.

Sunday, **11 June** 11.00 am.

Meet at Canada Water tube station.

For information contact:

Vincent Otter on **07905 791638** or **020 8361 3017** or Richard Botterill on **01582 764929**

Central London Dayschool

Saturday **10th June**, 1.30pm to 5.00pm

FOOD AND ENERGY PRODUCTION IN A POST CAPITALIST WORLD

1.30pm: Welcome. Tea, Coffee, Biscuits

2.00pm: "The End of the Oil Age?"

Gwynn Thomas examines the worsening problems arising from energy production and the advantages open to a socialist society in dealing with them.

Questions and discussion

3.20pm: Break

3.30pm: "Solving the Hunger Problem."

With the numbers of seriously undernourished people doubled over the last 30 years, Pieter Lawrence explains how a socialist society could stop deaths from hunger.

Questions and discussion.

4.50pm: Conclusion

Room 9, Friends Meeting House (side entrance), 173 Euston Road, London NW1. (Opposite Euston mainline station). Nearest tubes: Euston, Euston Square.

but, by implication, in other parts of the world too). "... the real Marxism, although no longer embodied in movements or governments, has never been truer or more relevant. Most of the world's main problems today are inseparable from the dynamics of the capitalist system itself." He stresses the inevitable dichotomies of the capitalist system and gives examples of socialism's values "nourishing community life", e.g. "The socialist standards of fairness, democracy, equality and justice are as much a part of daily life as are capitalism's values of privilege, unequal rewards and power."

He states that "...social movements for environmental protection, women's rights, racial equality sooner or later run up against institutional constraints imposed by capitalism. Then they discover they can't achieve

their goals without becoming anti-capitalists" and goes on to suggest that as such individuals and groups "try to coalesce around increasingly global alternatives" they should not be timid in naming this 'socialism'.

I read the article with a growing feeling of warmth towards him for putting the case so convincingly to readers, most of whom will call themselves leftists, progressives, democrats or liberals, but most of whom, also, are wary of associating themselves with the 's' word and need to be pushed out of their comfort zone. If they really do want a different world, a different way of living they first have to face up to the facts and see that a little reform here and there will not give them what they're seeking, and complaining about 'the others' won't do it either.

JANET SURMAN, Turkey

aimed at those left-wing intellectuals who thought that Russia was "progressive" and deserved support. Inevitably, and whatever Orwell may have intended, it was used by the West as an ideological weapon in the Cold War.

Ingle mentions that Orwell and Aldous Huxley offered contrasting views on how class society might evolve. It has to be said that, in the event, Huxley in his *Brave New World* turned out to be more prescient than Orwell. Capitalism has survived not by treating workers more and more brutally, but by making them think they are happy - happy slaves who don't even realise they are slaves rather than down-trodden proles.

ALB



The Mosley Movement Today: British Fascism's New Look

1932 saw the birth of the "British Union of Fascists," with their black shirts and uniforms, armoured cars, their provocative marches through the East End of London, and their Mass rallies. To-day, over 20 years later, the movement is still with us. They still hold out-door meetings, and recently Sir Oswald Mosley, held a number of indoor meetings in Birmingham, Kensington, Brixton, and elsewhere. True, it does not have the membership it had in the 'thirties. No longer are members allowed to wear uniforms.

Since the war, when over 800 of its members spent a number of years in prison, the movement has been re-organised and renamed. The B.U.F. is now "Union Movement." The word "Fascism" has - for the time being? - been dropped; no doubt because of its unpopularity. But the British Fascists continue to call themselves "Blackshirt." At the London County Council

Elections 1955, their candidates in Shoreditch and Finsbury urged electors to "Vote Blackshirt." And "Wake 'Em Up at County Hall."

"Union Movement" retains its pre-war "Flash" sign on its literature, banners, flags and badges.

To-day we no longer see "British for the British," or "Britain First," chalked or whitewashed on walls; although such slogans as "Slump or Mosley," or the letter "K.B.W." (Keep Britain White) can sometimes be seen in Kensington, Hackney, Brixton, and elsewhere.

"National Socialism," the phrase under which the German Nazis operated, has given way to Mosley's latest: European Socialism"-yet another contradiction! British Fascism wears a New Look!

(From an article by "PEN", *Socialist Standard*, June 1956)



WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
- Can't make it to a meeting?
- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

Join the forum via
www.worldsocialism.org

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the

consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class

will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the

working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Panic Aboard SS New Labour

A strategically timed withdrawal from government need not ruin a political career

If Tony Blair had been an officer on board the *Titanic* it is quite likely that, as the liner subsided into the icy sea, he would have occupied himself in re-arranging the seating on the deck. In that way, he might have hoped to convince the richer and more influential passengers that he was taking action to compensate for the design flaws which had made the ship so sinkable. This may even have persuaded the Cunard Steamship Company to overlook the fact that he had failed to notice the iceberg which ripped open the ship's hull while he was on watch. But that's quite enough on maritime disasters; what about this latest reshuffle in the government? (Of course "reshuffle" is another felicitous word - using the same dog-eared set of cards with the same paltry values but flicking them out in a different order hoping for a change of luck).

When it comes to political parties like New Labour "luck" means government ministers being able to give the impression that their control over capitalist society is such that they can neutralise causes of concern like crime, sickness and pollution. If they can parade statistics which support their self-assessment of the effect they have, they are rated as a success and can look forward to promotion to other, more important and more attention-attracting, jobs. But if they can't provide those statistics they face the sack. And if the government as a whole are in a crisis of inability there is liable to be a tidal wave of sackings, washing away some prominent politicians and encouraging the impression that we are ruled by a fresher, more energetic, government. This was how it was with Harold Macmillan's "Night of the Long Knives" in 1962, when the supposedly unflappable Prime Minister was so panicked by some spectacular by-election defeats that he fired, among others, his Chancellor of the Exchequer and odd-job man Selwyn Lloyd.

Clarke

There have been similarities between Macmillan's panic and Tony Blair's recent blunder into the minefield of political reality in conflict with party imagery. Among the prominent victims of Blair's reshuffle was Charles Clarke, the third in a succession of Home Secretaries who have all pledged to cure crime with a mixture of symptom repression and social surgery. Before he became Home Secretary Clarke, living down his reputation as a fiery student left-winger, held a succession of increasingly important posts. He became Education Secretary after Estelle Morris had resigned - or sort of been sacked - because she could not keep up with the job. Clarke, who obviously *could* do the job, put down his marker as a convert to the opponents of a range of traditional Labour policies when he supported the concept of specialist secondary schools and argued that state funding should not be available for "unproductive" humanitarian research. In case there was any misunderstanding he also said that

"Universities exist to enable the British economy and society to deal with the challenges posed by the increasingly rapid process of global change."

Which at least signalled that he had grasped the proper role of schooling in capitalism's competitive, commodity-based system without any nonsense about developing individual talents. And to drive the point home he introduced the Bills which established top-up university fees - even although his party's election manifesto had solemnly promised not to do this.

Clarke had to be one of the favourites to succeed David Blunkett when the latter finally had to give up being Home Secretary. This must have been very satisfying to the one-time Head Boy of the exclusive Highgate School, afterwards President of the Students' Union at Cambridge, which was a kind of apprenticeship for the job of President of the National Union of Students. As the Home Office is one of the three big government jobs anyone who gets there might assume they will one day make it to Number Ten. Except that the Home Office is known as a graveyard of political ambition, with quite a few career corpses - like Rab Butler, Roy Jenkins and Douglas Hurd. That fact puts Clarke's sacking - or rather part-sacking, part-resignation - in another perspective. As Anthony Eden, Harold Wilson and Aneurin Bevan learned, a strategically timed withdrawal from government need not ruin a political

career. It is no coincidence that soon after Clarke had left the Home Office he was said to have a promise from Gordon Brown of a prominent job in a future Brown government.

Reid

As a canny, long term operator Clarke will be aware that he has to keep an eye on a particular rival - John Reid, his successor as Home Secretary. Since he came into the job Reid has devoted himself, while being careful to formally salute Clarke's industry and skill in the Home Office, to undermining Clarke's hopes of reviving his career, by publicising higher and higher figures for the foreign nationals who should have been deported after release from prison. He has recently described the situation he inherited at the Home Office as having "...some very serious and systemic underlying problems..." and there is no secret about who he considers to be the likeliest person to sort them out.

Like Clarke, Reid is a fully paid up member of the Left Wing to Right Wing Tendency. "I used to be a Communist," he once said; "I used to believe in Santa Claus". Not that he is averse to a little gift, like in 1993 when, during the Bosnian war, he spent three relaxing days at a luxury hotel beside a lake in Geneva with his friend the indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic. At home he has keenly supported measures calculated to raise the blood pressure of the most placid Old Labour devotee - like compulsory Identity Cards, top-university fees and the Iraq war. Speaking on plans to introduce the American company Kaiser into the Health Service, he sneered at anyone having doubts about this privatising measure with the hint that they suffer from intellectual rigidity: "I believe that a preparedness to learn and improve is a sign of strength, not of weakness". The ex-Education overlord Reid is as well known for his robust vocabulary as for preparedness to refashion his principles; told that he had been promoted to secretary of State for Health he responded: "Oh fuck. Not Health". So far he has been too busy undermining Clarke's reputation to let on about how he feels at being Home Secretary; no doubt he was mollified by the fact that, as MP Frank Field put it, he would "certainly" be among those to challenge Gordon Brown for the Labour leadership.

Beckett

Reid's enemies (and there are plenty of them) in the Labour Party will be hoping that his intention to unravel the chaos at the Home Office will come to grief in face of what Clarke called its "seriously dysfunctional" style of operation, once cursed by David Blunkett as "a culture of incompetence and deliberate undermining of official policy". Others have had much the same opinion about the Foreign Office and perhaps that was why Margaret Beckett was promoted to take over there - the first ever female Foreign Secretary. Beckett is known (or should that be damned?) as "a safe pair of hands", which means she can be relied on to bat away any inconvenient questions about Labour's doomed attempts at efficiently managing British capitalism. She is another reborn left-winger, who once savaged Neil Kinnock for his refusal to back Tony Blair against Denis Healey for the Deputy Party leadership.

On another occasion she deeply upset Joan Lestor (herself no stranger to making massive adjustments in her political standpoint) by accepting Callaghan's offer of the very job in Education that Lestor had resigned over expenditure cuts. Beckett is well known for her unpretentious demeanour, what with her caravan holidays and her readiness to repair her make-up while sitting chatting in the pub. But nobody should be deceived that she will fail to represent the international interests of British capitalism for if the ups and downs, as well as the moves from left to right and back again, prove anything it is her steely resolve to do whatever her job demands.

So these are the new seating arrangements on the deck of the crippled ship. The lifeboats are filling up; being privileged and ruthless helps with getting a seat in them. But there is no prospect that anyone can repair that massive gash in the plates below water. Apart from the few socialists, nobody seems able to offer any idea other than waiting to be picked up by another, equally unhelpful, crew. ■

IVAN





Voice from the Back

What Immigration Problem?

The US government has recently had a crack down on illegal immigration and the French and British press have been full of the problems of immigration in those countries, but for one group there seems to be no problem in settling in another country.



Abramovich - Roman holiday

"Seven of the wealthiest billionaires living in Britain come from overseas, according to this year's Sunday

Times Rich List. Indian steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal comes out on top with a fortune estimated by the newspaper at £14.8 bn. Roman Abramovich drops to second place, but the Russian oil tycoon and Chelsea football club owner is reckoned to be worth £7.5 bn." (BBC NEWS, 3 April). So far none of the seven billionaires seem to be having any trouble with housing, schools or social security and no one has suggested passes or tagging for any of them.

Not So Bright

When socialists attack the inequalities of capitalism we are often told by its defenders that the owning class deserve their wealth because of their hard work or superior intellect. No one could ever accuse Paris Hilton of hard work, she recently celebrated her 21st birthday by having 5 birthday parties in 5 different countries, attended by thousands of friends. The rich tend to have more friends than the poor. If she couldn't be accused of hard work she certainly could not be accused of possessing a grasp of world affairs. "The word 'mother' confused her, a friend of Paris Hilton explains the hotel heiress's request to meet Mother Teresa's children in preparation for playing the nun in a new film" (Observer, 16 April).

Primitive Accumulation

In recent months we have highlighted the process of the capitalist class grabbing land and throwing off the previous occupants in India and China. Now from Botswana comes another example of this "primitive accumulation of capital" so well

described by Karl Marx in Capital in the 19th century. "Since 1997, more than



Diamonds are not a bushman's best friend

1,500 Gana and Gwi Bushmen have been evicted from their homes in the Kalahari" (Observer, 16 April). They have been found to be "primitive and a barrier to progress" ever since De Beers took an interest in the area's diamonds. .

A Fishy Story

Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are in dispute with Iran in a bitter controversy. What is it all about? Civil rights, nuclear armament? No way. This is about caviar! "Iran may be increasingly out of favour with the UK Security Council, but the UN Secretariat for



International Trade in Endangered Species gave the country the thumbs up last week, when it gave Iran's quota to export 44,000 kilos of caviar this year. Exports from

the other countries have been banned by the UN since January" (Times, 27 April). The price of caviar is currently £6,000 a kilo, so the furore is easily understood. After all Russia alone caught 650 tonnes in 2001. Millions or thousands of hard currencies is more important than war, poverty or civil rights to capitalist governments.

Do-Gooders Do Badly

"The world is failing children by not ensuring they have enough to eat, says the UN Children's Fund (Unicef). It says the number of children under five who are underweight has remained virtually unchanged since 1990, despite a target to reduce the number affected. Half of all the undernourished children in the world live in

South Asia, Unicef reported. And it said poor nutrition contributes to about 5.6 million child deaths per year, more than half the total" (BBC NEWS, 1 May). Despite the efforts of Unicef and countless well-meaning charities capitalism is still starving millions of children to death every year.

The American Nightmare

The journalist Heather Stewart in her Letter from Washington describes the contrast between the rich and poor in what is described as the most affluent country in the world. "Men in chinos and women with neat hair and brilliant white teeth sip giant cappuccinos or chat animatedly into their cellphones. ...Look closer, though, and there are signs of another DC. Tired looking black men stand on street corners holding out the same giant coffee cups to collect coins. The Washington Post details a horrific crime



DC Undercurrent - slums next to Congress in Washington

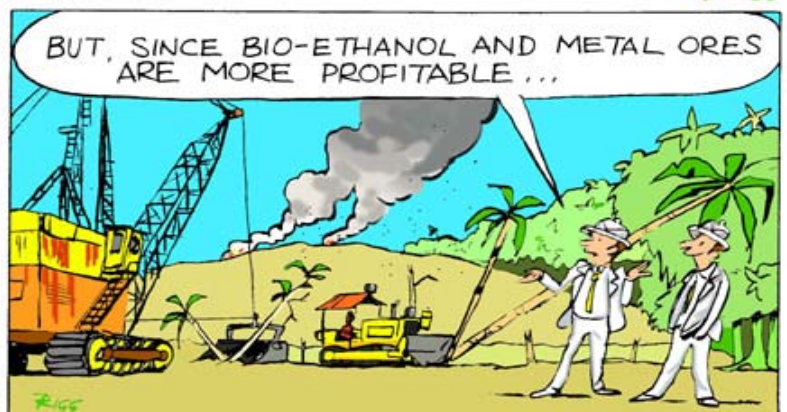
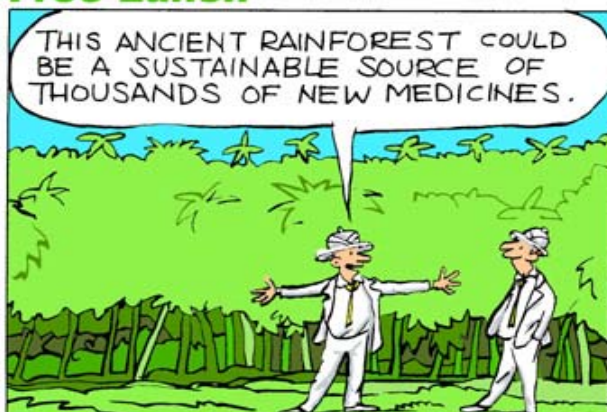
wave of car-jacking and gunpoint robberies. Less than a mile from the grandeur of the White House are neighbourhoods with all the deprivation and social issues of the poorest inner cities" (Observer, 23 April).

A Depressing Tale

"Depression is the biggest social problem in the UK, says Richard Lanyard, a health economist who advises the Government on mental health. He claims that 15 per cent of the population suffers from depression or anxiety, and that the cost in lost productivity is about £17 billion" (Times, 2 May). It is typical of capitalism that not only does it drive us screwy, it can only see mental ill-health as a productivity problem.

Free Lunch

by Rigg



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socialist standard

July 2006 Vol. 102 No. 1223 £1

Journal of The Socialist Party - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory



A look at their party case



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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial

The Way the World Is

It is sometimes argued that the kind of destitution and abject poverty that existed in the 1930s and earlier is no longer to be found in developed capitalist countries like the UK. Nowadays, the argument goes, workers take holidays abroad, have homes with several TVs and computers, and can spend large parts of their leisure time on shopping expeditions.

It is fair to respond to these observations by making two main kinds of point. Firstly, that workers are in fact by no means as well off as such a sketch implies. In England alone, for instance, there are a hundred thousand homeless families, few of whom take holidays abroad. Many migrant workers, here for fruit-picking, earn £70 for a six-day week when various deductions are taken into account (Guardian 5 June). They cannot even afford to buy the strawberries they pick. The UK minimum wage is a mere £5.05 per hour for those over 21, and around a million workers are on the legal minimum - few have home computers for them. A couple of years ago, it was claimed by a trade union that employees in British supermarkets would have to work 94 hours a week to earn the national average wage. So low pay is by no means a thing of the past.

Secondly, how well off workers are in terms of wages is not the whole picture. The insecurity caused by redundancies and the fear of redundancies, the short-term contracts now so widely used, the boring dead-end 'McJobs', the ever-present fear of production being moved to other countries with lower wage rates - all these undermine workers' sense of well-being. Nearly one person in six in Britain is described as depressed, while over a million are mentally ill and receiving incapacity benefit. Such is the stress and hassle of living under capitalism. At the same time hospitals close and trained medical staff are made unemployed, while overall levels of sickness show no sign of decreasing. The amount of debt is also an indication of how badly off workers really are. Eight million people have over £10,000 of unsecured debt (that is, excluding a mortgage); a third of

these say that their debt situation has had an adverse effect on their health or relationships. This year perhaps as many as 100,000 people will declare themselves bankrupt as a means of escaping from their financial problems.

Thus it cannot be said that capitalism has raised workers' living standards to a level where they no longer have to concern themselves with how high their wages are or how secure their position in society is. Poverty and worry about the future are built-in to capitalism as far as the working class are concerned.

Moreover, if you take a global perspective, you can see that things are even worse. Half the world's population live on less than two dollars a day, and many on far less. Every day one person in five goes hungry. Over a billion people have no reliable water supplies and more than twice that number lack sanitation. Statistics like this can be multiplied for ever: the essential point is that an incredibly large part of the earth's population lead lives of numbing poverty and precariousness.

At the same time, a relatively small number of people are rich beyond the imaginations of ordinary people. A few hundred billionaires own as much wealth as the world's poorest 2.5 billion people. The inequality which exists under world capitalism is simply breathtaking, and it is increasing: the world has never been so unequal as it is today. Governments exist essentially to defend the interests of the rich and powerful. Wars are fought to serve their interests too, whether to gain access to oil or to deny such access to others, or to open up some area to so-called free trade.

This is the way the world is. But it should not and need not be this way. Instead, the world could be run on Socialist lines, without rich or poor, without wages or money, without countries or governments. If you think this sounds like a better way of organising things, contact the Socialist Party and see how you can help to bring it about.

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Blue-blood genes

Something even non-scientific readers of scientific developments quickly become wary of are bold claims. As Carl Sagan often insisted, extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.

In the absence of this, one is entitled to take the proposition that entrepreneurs (capitalists) are genetically predisposed, with a pinch of salt (*BBC Online*, June 6). A study of 609 pairs of identical twins and 657 pairs of same-sex non-identical twins in the UK found that the rate of entrepreneurship between the two groups was the same as the general population, but the rate of entrepreneurship for both twins was higher in identical twins (sharing all their genes) than non-identicals (sharing about half their genes). This, announced the researchers, was evidence that genes play an important role in determining who is likely to succeed in business and who isn't, which in turn may affect which students business schools might prefer to enrol on their courses.

Professor Tim Spector, director of the Twin Research Unit at St Thomas' Hospital, London, is enthusiastic about genetics but plainly out of his depth in economics: "Although entrepreneurs are vital to the economy, as they create wealth and jobs, no-one knows precisely what drives people to become an entrepreneur." This illustrates something *Pathfinders* has noted before, that scientists have a tendency to one-dimensional thinking: while they may challenge every assumption within their own field of research, they are happy to base their work on any and every assumption in other fields, no matter how crude and unsupported. That capitalists create wealth is not simply an assumption fostered only by capitalists themselves, it displays an ignorance of the everyday world, of economics and of history, bordering on the crass. Moreover, the current craze of looking for genetic causes for every aspect of human behaviour is fast becoming as tedious as it is futile, and simply plays to the media obsession for simple soundbite science. There is no capitalist gene, just as there is no fat gene, or violence gene, or possessive gene. Scientists who make public announcements of tenuous results of tenuous studies of tenuous premises risk immersing the debate in mud and obscurantism. The truth is, if you run your society in a violent and competitive way, it will inevitably produce violent and competitive people. Which particular DNA proteins or base-pair combinations were involved, is in one sense rather beside the point.

La Dolce Vita

New Scientist of June 3 ran a cover page splash on nine different routes to health and long life, all supposedly based on the latest research. These nine ways were: 1: have a little of what's bad for you; 2: socialise more; 3: consider moving to where people live longer; 4: enjoy your vices (er, same as 1?); 5: keep your brain active; 6: relax, have a laugh, kill stress; 7: be a hypochondriac; 8: eat healthier; 9: make life more exciting. *New Scientist* clearly should have read their own magazine from the week before (May 27), because while there may be nothing wrong with these suggestions, there is one more way of staying healthy and living longer which the magazine inexcusably forgot to mention: don't be poor, be rich. According to Michael Marmot, professor of epidemiology and public health at University College, London, and author of *Status Syndrome* (Bloomsbury, 2004): "There is a social gradient in health. It is not only that the poor have poor health: the lower someone's social position, the worse their health is. During the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, the gap in life expectancy between men in the top and bottom socio-economic groups in England and Wales increased from 5.5 years to 9.5 years" (*New Scientist*, May 27). And as Marmot notes, it is not a question of absolute poverty, as for example in sub-Saharan countries, but relative poverty and lack of autonomy. Marmot conducted a study of civil servants that showed that lower ranks, with less control, had a higher risk of heart disease. He argues that there is a causal relationship between low status and lack of control over decision-making and stress-related disease, and his solution is government legislation to redistribute income more equitably. Socialists know there is a fat chance of this happening, and that within the framework of capitalism, any short term advantage thus gained would soon be wiped out anyway. All the indications are that common ownership and democratic control are the best way to long life and happiness.

A Whale of a Tale

When members vote in Socialist Party ballots, the votes are open, whereas in capitalist political elections, the votes are secret. In a society free of sectional interests, there ought to be no reason for an individual to keep their opinions and their votes to themselves. However in early capitalism, where votes were also open, huge pressures were brought to bear on individual voters. These pressures included bribery, blackmail, and threats of eviction, sackings, personal injury and death. Eventually workers won the right to a secret ballot, and thus the situation remains,



except in the Socialist Party, of course, where elections tend not to inspire such extreme responses, and where, besides, the feeling is that a democratic process needs to be as transparent as possible in order to see and understand what is going on. Thus, paradoxically, both open and secret voting can be seen as aiding, or inhibiting, the practice of democratic fair play.

A recent case illustrates both sides of this problem. The International Whaling Commission is, as most marine environmentalists know, about to have control wrested back from the whale-friendly conservationist ruling junta, who for the past twenty years have imposed a moratorium on all commercial whaling. The country leading the coup, Japan, have been busily running around offering bribes of aid to small island countries in order to get their votes to resume whaling (*New Scientist*, June 17). Japan is not in a position to gain 75 percent of the vote to do this yet, but can probably secure over 50 percent needed for a simple majority to change current voting practice from open to secret. As small countries like the Marshall Islands face what Australia describes as 'international outrage' if they succumb to bribes and vote with Japan, the incentive to cast their votes secretly is clearly very strong. But most of these countries, indeed most of the IWC members, are not whaling countries. So what are they doing in the IWC in the first place?

The original regulatory body of the IWC, established in 1946, consisted of just 15 whaling nations. Through a long and, some might say, heroic struggle by Peter Scott of the World Wildlife Fund, a loophole in the IWC's constitution was exploited, allowing non-whaling nations to join. These new members outnumbered the original 'butcher's club' and were happy, as a result of various 'incentives' by the conservationist lobby, to vote the whalers into retirement. All that Japan have done is to open the membership still further, to the present level of 70 countries, and change the nature of the incentives. However, the big discouragement to small countries is that they may lose more than they gain by supporting Japan, unless they can do it on the quiet. Hence, the first step to the resumption of whaling is to obtain a secret ballot.

The question of whether whaling would exist in socialist society is not the biggest that will face that society. However, a huge factor influencing the activities of countries like Japan and Norway is that a large proportion of their economies rely on it. At present the taste for whalemeat is in decline globally, even in Japan, so they may be fighting a losing battle in any case. But in socialism, where people's lives and livelihoods won't depend on this hideous practice, it is hard to imagine any justification for continuing it. Let the giants keep their deep. Humans can find other ways to provide for themselves.

Scientific proofs

Dear Editors

As both a scientist and a socialist, I was dismayed to read two statements in the May *Socialist Standard* which appear to reflect an anti-science or anti-academia bias.

The first statement, found in the Pathfinders column, is that "science itself is unable to prove anything very much at all, whether it is a theory of gravity, evolution, or climate change". While this is 'technically' true, it is more than a little disingenuous, and may lead readers to believe that the Socialist Party rejects science as a tool for understanding nature and the human condition.

Science works by proposing theories, which are tested to see if they account for the available data, and then modified if they do not. Because new data is always being discovered, scientific theories are never proved with absolute certainty in the sense of a mathematical or logical proof, but rather in the sense of a legal proof - "beyond a reasonable doubt". The overwhelming evidence in support of the theory of evolution is such that no biologist disputes its ability to account for the fossil record and origin of species; in this informal sense the theory can rightly be said to be "proven". Socialists should therefore not reject calls for scientific proof of our social and economic theories; rather, we should meet them by providing supporting evidence, or by modifying our theories when presented with contradictory evidence.

The second passage with which I take issue appears in Voice from the Back, where some professors are ridiculed for speculating on some matter of Christian mythology

instead of speaking out against world hunger. I'd like to know what evidence the author of this piece has that these professors are not socialists and are unsympathetic to the problem of world hunger. And is it his belief that the study of ancient history and literature has no redeeming value, and that it will be abandoned in socialism? Or merely that any activity not directly related to bringing about socialism should be held up to condemnation and ridicule? Perhaps the author may be able to devote every waking hour of his life to socialist propagandizing, but most of the rest of need to set aside at least some of our time for employment, hobbies, relaxation, and yes, even inconsequential philosophical debates.

TRISTAN MILLER, London SW4

Another view of Freud

Dear Editors

I'd like to comment on the article "Freud and Marx: do they mix?" (May *Socialist Standard*) and put forward some of my own thoughts on the subject. In order to appreciate Freud you really need to approach him with the right mind-set. That mind-set, in my opinion, is an ability to understand where he's "coming from", together with a willingness to appreciate his insights without necessarily buying into his ideas wholesale. This second point was explained by J.A.C. Brown in his book *Freud and the Post-Freudians*:

"It is convenient to regard the total body of Freudian thought as falling into roughly three categories: its basic psychological concepts; the theories based on clinical observations and described in terms of this conceptual scheme; and the

essentially philosophical conclusions on such subjects as the nature of society and civilization, war and religion, which Freud drew from his own thought and experience. Whether or not such a division is logically justifiable it is undoubtedly empirically useful in any consideration of his influence on scientific thought; for many would accept his general approach to psychological problems who would not be uncritical of his theories, and others would accept both without taking very seriously his metaphysical conclusions."

Freud's outstanding fault was over-generalisation. But even this criticism of him has to be qualified because you have to judge each of his points individually. Making sweeping statements about someone who made so many different individual points over so many years is it itself an over-generalisation.

Many people have claimed that Freud's ideas are untestable. This isn't necessarily true. Seymour Fisher and Roger P. Greenberg have made a concerted effort to test Freud's ideas against a wide range of scientific evidence. Their findings are compiled in their two books *The Scientific Credibility of Freud's Theories and Therapy* and *Freud Scientifically Reappraised*. The following paragraph, which appears in their first book, gives you an idea of their general approach:

"Overall, the best argument we can muster for scientifically testing Freud's models is the fact that many competent people have already tried their hand at it and discovered new, interesting things. It should be added that their fairly precise quantitative observations are making it possible to speak in terms of the degree to which Freud's ideas are valid or not valid, rather than simply

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The 'Prescott Express'.

What price democracy?

Recent scandals about donations to political parties confirm that under capitalism some - those with money - are more equal than others.

Births - marriages - deaths - everything in capitalism, even that which currently passes for democracy, has a price, and last month the Electoral Commission, an independent body that oversees political party spending on elections, published its balance sheet on the costs of the last UK General Election.

Mrs Blair, the wife of the Prime Minister, who was not contesting any constituency, apparently spent £7,700 on having her hair done. The acceptance of this by the independent commission presumably means that this woman's hair was in some way related to the electoral system that is supposed to underwrite our alleged freedom of choice.

There were other serious items: £3,638 went on make-up for the then Tory leader, Michael Howard - an expense that failed utterly to disguise his loutish leer. The Labour Party spent £264,000 on a bus and another £75,000 having it converted and yet a further £3,172 re-branding it as the Prescott Express - a somewhat tantalising sobriquet in the light of recent events.

And then there were the very serious items; very serious because the huge amounts involved were spent on providing personnel in the form of spin doctors and professional liars skilled in mendacity and obfuscation who it was calculated could convert voters into parting with their votes. £441,000 was paid to an Australian 'political tactician', while his short-stay accommodation in London cost the Tories a further £27,000. Fortunately for Labour, there was no need to import political charlatans as part of the carefully choreographed Blair strategy was to

cultivate their own indigenous species of con artists.

Why?

In total the infamous 'three main parties' spent some £40 million buying representation in the House of Commons. That, it could be said, is the price of British democracy. The Labour Party spent £18 million, the Tories roughly the same amount and the Lib-Dems £4.3 million. Effectively, this is what it costs to ensure that the personnel staffing British capitalism's political administration do not pose any threat to an economic order firmly based on the exploitation of the overwhelming majority of the electors.

Traditionally, rich and very rich people supported the Tories and when the Liberal Party was the alternative government of British capitalism it, too, enjoyed the influence and affluence of the rich and powerful. It was unnecessary to ask why rich people and prosperous business enterprises supported these parties; their donations were investments in politics; investments that would encourage a healthy return in the form of ensuring that government would not pursue legislative practices harmful to the interests of its donors. In other words, that politicians would not bite the hand that feeds them.

Labour Party spokespersons were once vociferous in exposing and emphasising this support of the landed gentry and the industrial and commercial magnates for its political opponents. Labour's then more frugal organisational and campaigning funds came largely from the trade unions, who also assumed they were promoting a political interest sympathetic to the cause of their members

as well as opening avenues to career betterment for aspiring union leaders.

That was before the Labour Party had demonstrated to the British ruling class that it had become the electable alternative to the Tories and could safely exchange places with the Liberal Party. Despite the occasional bit of leftist sloganising from its slow learners, experience had clearly shown that Labour leaders were now aware that in government they had to facilitate capitalism - a task they could frequently do more efficiently than the Tories because the fiction prevailed that they represented the working class.

Incompatible with genuine democracy

The media, which is supposed to inform us, didn't raise a head of steam about the Electoral Commission's report but did raise a fuss about the remarkable generosity of the millionaires clamouring to 'lend' money to the Labour Party under foot of reasonable expectations of titles of one sort or another. The Tories, on the principle of honour among thieves, didn't overly embarrass the government either - indeed Prescott's sexual adventures received more attention than the scarcely covert corruption in both government and opposition.

The question is, where does all this leave the issue of democracy, that vague principle which the government have men and women trained to kill and die for and which we are told is the guarantor of our freedom?

The politicians, the media and the rest of what are called 'opinion formers' insist that we have democracy, that we have free elections which allow us to choose whatever form of government we wish, unlike countries where a single-party dictatorship exists.

Such dictatorships usually allow elections where the people may approve or



The expensively coiffured Cherie Blair with, inset, her hairdresser

“the ‘three main parties’ spent some £40 million buying representation in the House of Commons”

disapprove of given candidates within the dictatorship but have not the freedom to vote for any other parties or for independent candidates. In other words the people have imposed on them by force, corruption or the control of information a specific political regime and have not got the necessary democratic machinery to challenge that regime.

Dictatorship and bourgeois democracy

Looking at the vast sums of money involved in our allegedly democratic elections we can hardly claim that they are ‘free!’ In fact in most of the so-called democratic countries it could be said that the astronomical costs of challenging for political power have been deliberately manipulated in order to ensure that those who cannot attract rich backers will be denied meaningful access to the democratic process.

Effectively this means that in the same way as people in dictatorships are denied the right to make real *political* changes, in Britain and other allegedly democratic societies prohibitive financial restrictions are placed in the way of the working class organising politically to effect real *economic* change.

This does not mean that socialists equate dictatorship and bourgeois democracy. Within the latter we are free to organise politically and to develop our support to the extent where we can eventually overcome the embargoes and impediments that capitalism’s restricted democratic forms impose on us, whereas in the former any Socialist work is necessarily clandestine and can invoke severe penalties.

What we can equate is the hypocrisy of bourgeois politicians, who rightly condemn those capitalist dictatorships where political freedom is denied and yet are willing participants and vociferous defenders of a form of capitalism wherein

financial impediments exist that make a mockery of real democracy.

Consolidation

The recent debacle surrounding the revelations of enormous financial donations and alleged loans from the millionaires to Labour and the Tories (the Lib-Dems do not represent as promising a political investment as the others) may have caused some embarrassment. It will, however, be a passing phenomenon because the very system that exposes them



“providing the parties of capitalism with the financial means of maintaining their monopoly of power”

also protects them in that it excludes meaningful opposition from outside the ‘three main parties’.

That said, however, the evident chicanery of the whole nasty business requires some means of political sanitising that will shield the politicians while still providing the parties of capitalism with the financial means of maintaining their monopoly of power - without allowing any democratic access for cultivating meaningful opposition either to the system itself or its trusted political agents.

Various suggestions have been made but the front runner appears to be the state funding of elections. Such a method, across the board and pertaining to every candidate in elections, might be a welcome

widening of the political process, which is why it is unlikely to happen. More likely is a scheme to allocate funds on the basis of the number of MPs each party has in parliament, which would simply perpetuate the present situation and consolidate the current undemocratic scheme while resolving the embarrassing issue of funding for the politicians and their parties.

Fair and free elections

The idea of fair and free elections would give the ruling class political apoplexy. Imagine a general election where socialists had a level playing field, an election that was in effect a plebiscite on the question of Socialism or Capitalism. The traditional parties of capitalism would be united in telling us about the remarkable plethora of reforms they intended to introduce to ease poverty in certain areas, to reduce crime, to tackle the housing problem, help the aged, build nuclear bomb shelters, etcetera.

The socialists would not be offering any reforms of the old, failed system in which the vast potential of the planet is owned and controlled by a relatively small minority of people who allow the production of goods and services only when it holds the promise of profit for them. On the contrary, we would be asking for a mandate to abolish the entire concept of ownership in the means of production and distribution so that everyone could freely participate in wealth production and everyone would be free to take from the common pool of wealth thus created in accordance with their needs.

Further, in the context of what we are discussing, we would be offering the establishment of an open and genuine system of participative democracy in a world where the massively destructive and ubiquitously corruptive power of money would no longer exist. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE

A so-called socialist in parliament

George Galloway is a corrupt and corrupting man. Not corrupt in the sense in which a good capitalist would understand - grubbing for money in brown envelopes, a wide boy with an eye for the main chance when the price is right. His success in the libel courts, which only understand the pecuniary corruption which is such a threat to capitalists' profits, underlines this. His corruption is one of a sort more familiar to the workers' movement: a man giddy on success and status born from his ability to be at the centre of things.

The US Senate enquiry - in which he displayed his prolixity with sufficient robustness and deftness as to be able to have scored a victory by speaking truth to power and rebutting their slanderous lies - proved the point despite all his bluster. The outcome of their enquiry was not that he had trousered cash corruptly obtained from the Oil For Food Programme set up by the UN under the Iraq sanctions regime - no matter how much they wanted that to be the outcome and the press trumpeted that likely outcome. The truth was subtler than that. It revealed how Galloway's Mariam Appeal had been funded chiefly by a man called Fawaz Zuriekat - who was in all likelihood (according to the Senate investigation) a recipient of such theft.

Whether Galloway knew this or not is irrelevant. As he rightly notes, the rest of the cash came from a handful of Saudi princes and potentates; but therein lies the real truth of his corruption. Everything he is now is based on the success and prominence the Mariam Appeal won for him - it made his reputation as an opponent of the siege and attack on Iraq; but that appeal was funded by powerful capitalists with vested anti-working class interests in the Middle East and beyond.

The effect of this can be clearly seen in his parliamentary behaviour. At the best of time a notoriously lax MP (he famously managed to miss a key vote on the terrorism act that the Government only

won by one vote); however, when he does raise questions they almost always relate to Israel and the government's behaviour towards it. His primary purpose is to be a cheerleader for the ruling class in the Arab world against the ruling class in Britain and America - presumably in the name of some sort of anti-imperialism, a doctrine long used by capitalists in relatively weak countries to try and pursue their ends.

The indication of his worthlessness was on 8 May when he secured an adjournment debate. This is an opportunity open under parliamentary procedure for all MPs to be able to make speeches and have a reply from a government Minister on the subject of their choosing, lasting about 40 minutes all told. The MP, who maintains that the fall of the Soviet Union was the saddest day of his life and whose biographies still refer to him as a socialist, chose to spend his nearly two thousand words in a fifteen-minute speech not on attacking capitalism, revealing its brutalities and its failure.

Instead, true to his egomaniacal form, he chose to discuss press regulation and call upon the government to make "thorough caps on media ownership, especially ownership by foreign billionaires whose loyalty is certainly not to this country." He dwelt extensively on how beset and abused he himself was by the media, as a basis for this call for a reform. This, apparently, is the tribune of the working class, the voice of the oppressed majority - a so-called socialist in parliament.

What a Socialist could do

As the *Socialist Standard* has demonstrated for over a hundred years, two thousand words is plenty to incisively damn capitalism and point the way towards socialism. The condition of the working class is such that it would be easy to find detailed cases and generally observable trends that need and deserve

the light of day - ignored by the mainstream parties in their open support of capitalism. The endless sophistries from their own mouths are meat enough for socialist attack.

Galloway, however, is a living confirmation of the Socialist Party's case of avoiding leadership and leaders in our movement. The SWP and its Respect front are tied to this man and his spurious reputation.

Obviously, he is not the first. The Communist Party had MPs in Parliament - even the trotskyist Militant Tendency managed to claim some MPs as their own in the 1980's. Usually, they were part of a minority of one, unable to make any real effect on the proceedings of Parliament.

The Socialist Party, though, maintains its intention to send delegates to parliament. Not as leaders, but as servants of the cause - with a specific job to do. The very minimum we could expect of a small number of socialist MPs is that they use the resources of parliament to uncover as much detail and information as they can about what is happening under capitalism to the working class. The machinery of government collects vast reams of data in the course of its daily business, but data is worthless unless it is put into context and turned into information.

They could add to this by using the weapon of the parliamentary question, to try and force the government to give up more information and to ensure that it has an incentive to collect the relevant data in order to be able to answer such questions. This would have the added advantage of giving the opportunity of getting our agenda onto the television and other media.

Whilst the votes of a small handful of MPs may not matter overall, their voices also would carry weight - and socialists in parliament would be able to put the case for socialism alongside defending the interests of the working class in their day to day struggle - such as

"Galloway maintains that the fall of the Soviet Union was the saddest day of his life"



Dead or alive? Galloway on Channel 4's Celebrity Big Brother

during any major strikes or the like. This would allow us to expose the sitting MPs of the capitalist parties and assist workers in rallying to the cause of their class - a platform from which to speak to the whole world.

Moreover, we would use whatever votes we would have while a minority to vote in the interests of the working class. This would not be something for the still small conscience of our delegates but a matter for our movement to decide and instruct them upon - a means of being grit in the parliamentary machine as well as one of demonstrating our greater democratic legitimacy. The growth of the socialist movement is the advance of the working class movement. Until such time as the movement is able to take control of the whole of society, we will push for our common interests. Not with some plan of making capitalism work for us, or with a set of reforms in mind but as a mill stone round the neck of capital.

The case for socialism rests on the understanding of the workers. The working class's support is needed for the ongoing existence of capitalism. Once we understand our real interest and begin to consciously organise to get it no leader or deceiver is going to be able to deflect us from our course, and the days of the likes of Galloway will be numbered. Until then the workers get the leaders and representatives they choose and deserve. The job of socialists here and now if to promote the case for using our party as a weapon in the class struggle. We don't need to be in parliament to demonstrate how worthless Galloway and his followers are to the workers' movement.

Going to Parliament is not the act of good boys but of rebels fighting canny. ■ PIK SMEET



Cooking the Books (1)

Baron Rothschild rides again

According to the *Times* (13 May), the Rothschild dynasty is to invest again in Black

Sea oil from which they were ejected after the Bolshevik coup in 1917. In the 19th century the Rothschilds were often regarded as the archetypal capitalists. To be honest, this wasn't entirely free from anti-semitism. Even Paul Lafargue, who was married to one of Marx's daughters, was not immune from this.

But if, as the pre-WWI German Social Democrat August Bebel remarked, "anti-semitism is the socialism of the fool", then a leading contender for the prize of biggest fool must go to the anarchist and comic opera revolutionist Bakunin who wrote in one of his polemics against Marx:

"I am sure that, on the one hand, the Rothschilds appreciate the merits of Marx, and that on the other hand, Marx feels an instinctive inclination and a great respect for the Rothschilds. This may seem strange. What could there be in common between communism and high finance? Ho

ho! The communism of Marx seeks a strong state centralization, and where this exists, there the parasitic Jewish nation-which speculates upon the labour of people-will always find the means for its existence" (*Polemique contre les Juifs*, 1872, quoted <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bakunin>).

On the other hand, F. A. Sorge, who was one of Marx's correspondents in America, recounted the following anecdote concerning a member of the dynasty:

"One day in 1848, as the story goes, Baron Rothschild took a walk on the Common of Frankfurt-on-the-Main. Two labourers met him and accosted him thus: 'Baron, you are a rich man; we want to divide with you.' Baron Rothschild, not the least puzzled, took out his purse good-humouredly and answered: 'Certainly! We can do that business on the spot. The account is easily made. I own 40 millions of florins; there are 40 millions of Germans. Consequently each German has to receive one florin; here is your share;' and giving one florin to each of the labourers, who looked at their money quite confused, he walked off smiling" (www.marxists.org/archive/sorge/1876/socialism-worker.htm).

The point Sorge was making is still valid. Bill Gates could behave in the same way today. One estimate of his personal

wealth is \$100 billion. The world's population is about 6.5 billion. So, if similarly accosted, the amount he would give would be \$15. Even if only the US population was concerned they'd get only \$333 each.

Contrary to a widespread belief, socialism is not about equal sharing or redistributing wealth more evenly. It's about the common ownership of the means of wealth production. Which is a different proposition altogether. These means are already a single integrated network operated collectively by the whole working class, but they are owned separately, whether by rich individuals, capitalist corporations or states. It's not a question of dividing them or their monetary value up amongst the population but of making them the common property of all.

On this basis they can be used to turn out what people require to satisfy their needs and to which everyone can have access to satisfy those needs in accordance with the principle "from each their ability, to each their needs". Because people's needs are different so will be what they take and use. But everyone will have an equal right to satisfy their different needs. That's what socialism means, not sharing out the wealth of Bill Gates, the Rothschilds or other wealthy individuals.

Exploding the human nature myth



Picture this:

Scene: The High Courts of Justice, London. On trial is a 30 year-old man, charged with 3 armed robberies, 3 counts of attempted murder, and 5 charges of assaulting police officers and another of incapacitating a police dog. The QC for the prosecution has finished summing up. He sits down, satisfied he had done enough to see this psychopath imprisoned for 350 years, and now the defendant's barrister approaches the jury, one hand in his pocket and fidgeting with his car keys.

Barrister: Members of the Jury! It's an open and shut case as far as I can see. It's human nature, innit? Humans are by nature greedy, selfish and aggressive. We've been like this for donkey's years. Nothing you can do about it, eh? He can't help it (points to defendant) - he's naturally predisposed to be a violent robber. I, therefore, urge you to find my client not guilty on account of this 'ere human nature thing.

The jury retires and the judge adjourns. Five minutes later the jury returns. The foreman of the jury hands the usher a note which is then passed to his Lordship Justice Fairlaw. The judge looks at the slip of paper, raises an eyebrow and puts the note to one side.

Justice Fairlaw: Have the ladies and gentlemen of the jury reached a verdict on which you are all unanimous?

Foreman of the Jury: Yes, M'Lud.

Justice Fairlaw: And it is?

Foreman of the Jury: We find the defendant not guilty, M'Lud. We're all agreed it's not really his fault. Like his barrister said, it's human nature, innit?

Justice Fairlaw: In that case you're free to go Mr Stabbemall

and jury were completely and utterly bonkers. Your faith in the criminal justice system would be shattered into a billion pieces.

This, however, is just the kind of logic socialists come up against when trying to convince people of the benefits of a socialist society. People will hear us out, agree that capitalism is insane and that our vision of a future society sounds perfect, and then wallop you with their evolutionary psychological analysis of human society, saying:

"Yeah, I agree with everything you say. But it ain't gonna work, is it, coz of human nature? At the end of the day, humans are greedy selfish and aggressive. Always have been, always will be."

Which immediately puts your socialist on the defence: "Are you greedy, selfish and aggressive?"

"No, but . . . err . . . I'm . . ."

"Good to hear it. Neither am I. Hold on a sec, I'll ask this bloke here." And the socialist holds out an arm and attracts the attention of a passer-by. "Sorry to bother you. I wonder if I could ask you a question."

"Yeah, sure?" The passer buy joins the socialist and his critic.

"Right, would you consider that you are greedy and selfish?"

"Most certainly not."

"Maybe aggressive?"

"No."

"Thanks. That's all."

"That it?"

"Yes, thanks. Have a leaflet." The socialist turns back to the evolutionary psychologist. "I'll ask this woman crossing the road."

The street psychologist walks off, muttering under his breath that the socialist is distorting his words.

The 'human nature' objection to socialism manifests itself in numerous ways, though it is usually the human nature of others, the wider society, which is acting as the barrier to socialism, never that of the model citizen and objector.

Let's look briefly at the argument that humans are "by nature greedy, selfish and aggressive."

So are humans naturally aggressive?

Well, if this is so then why do governments have to bring in conscription to force young men and women into their armies during times of war? At previous times, in Britain's history, people have woken up from a drunken night to find themselves clutching the 'king's shilling', turned into cannon fodder overnight, having been tricked into the army, and others have woken up in the holds of war ships which had already put to sea. Here, in Britain, where there is no conscription, very few people join the army with a view to killing others. Most join because they see it as an alternative to the dole queue or because they seek adventure or believe the army can teach them a valuable trade.

Moreover, one real problem armies have is that of desertion. In the Vietnam War, 50,000 US soldiers deserted. Since the current war in Iraq began some 8,000 members of

the US armed forces have deserted (http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-03-07-deserters_x.htm). In previous wars, the army hierarchy has



A group of U.S. Army deserters who fled to Canada and reunited at the American Deserters Committee, Montréal, Quebec, 7 February 1970.

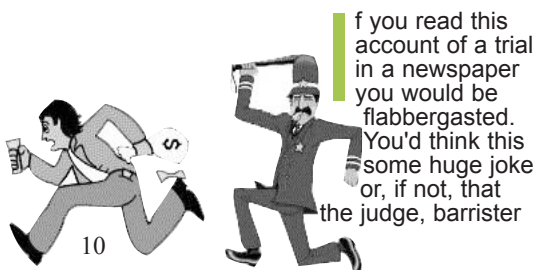
had to introduce the death penalty for deserters in an attempt to prevent so many fleeing the front line. So much for innate aggression.

Again, if humans are naturally aggressive, then why is there so much opposition to war? Surely our inborn aggressiveness compels us to cheer on "our boys" into battle, but this is not so. The February 2003 Anti-War demo in London became the biggest ever demonstration in British political history, with almost 2 million protestors taking to the streets of the capital, having travelled from all over the country. They were not alone; there were coinciding demonstrations in cities right across the globe. Hundreds of thousands carried placards saying "Not in my name" - determined to make clear their opposition to conflict.

Critics may counter by citing the rising levels of physical violence as evidence of a violent trend amongst humans. But even this can be attributed to the fact that well over 90 percent of this violent crime is carried out when the



Biggest ever demo - London, February 2003



perpetrator is drunk or high on drugs. The remainder tend to be violent crimes of desperation, rooted in poverty. When for instance, did you hear of a member of the aristocracy jumping an old lady on her way out of the bingo hall and snarling, "rightho, missus, let's 'ave yer 'and bag"?

The human aggression argument is looking pretty dubious, so we'll move on.

So humans are greedy?

Our objector assumes that in a free access society, which socialism would be - where people give freely of their abilities, taking from the stockpile of communal wealth according to their own self-defined needs - that there would be an orgy of consumption. It is assumed that people would simply go mad and grab at anything that did not have to be bought; running home with 20 loafs of bread and five walkman cd players.

Now, have you ever watched a mother and, say, a two-year old child in a corner shop? The mother will be at the counter, momentarily distracted, paying for her groceries, and her child heads for the confectionery display. The child has no real conception of the buying, selling and exchange game that parents play; one penny might as well be a pound coin - they're just little fiddly things adults play with. Children simply take so much for granted. The mother will call the child away from the sweet display, and the child, wanting something, brings an item back - a packet of Smarties maybe - to her mother in the hope the parent will approve. Now note, it is just one packet, not ten and six bags of crisps! Just one packet of Smarties! Surely innate greed would mean the child would be more predisposed to fill his or her arms with a stash of chocolate than an adult - believing this to be simply for the taking. But no, the child will take what he or she thinks will satisfy his or her immediate needs. For him or her there is always another day - mum's always in this shop - and it doesn't look like all this free access confectionery is going anywhere in a hurry.

What possible benefit could there be to storing goods that were in plentiful supply and freely available? Take more than you need by way of perishables and you'll end up with a cupboard full of stinking and rotting vegetables. Water is generally considered to be "free" - you can for instance go into a public building and get a free drink at a water fountain - but no one runs in with 10 gallon containers in order to hoard it at home. Air is free, but when did you last hear of anyone extracting it and storing it in warehouses?

In a free society it is far easier just to take for your immediate needs and to



How much bread can you possibly want?

return when you require more. It is only in class society as exists today, where commodities have two values, a use value and an exchange value, where the profit motive results in artificial scarcity, that people display characteristics associated with greed. But establish a society in which the artificial constraints on production are removed (profit), in which goods have a use value only, and are produced for no other reason than that people need them, and people's approach to obtaining them will change.

Humans are selfish?

Are we really self-seeking, self-centred and egotistical? Well, let's begin with a few facts.

In Britain, as of March 2006, there were 167,000 registered charities (Charity Commission website) and in the USA there are 1.3 million charities (Independent Sector, a US coalition of non-profit organisations). These charities involve millions of people who give their free time, unpaid, for what they believe are worthy causes that benefit others. Some 85 percent of the British public give regularly to charities. According to a survey by Independent Sector, a US coalition of non-profit organisations, the percentage of volunteers in America is the largest of any country - almost 56 percent. The average hours volunteered per week by an individual is 3.5 hours. According to Charity America, donations to charity for 2002 were \$241 billion, 76.3 per cent of this given by individuals.

Now let's go back to 26 December 2004, when the Asian tsunami hit, killing upwards of 200,000. Overnight charities

mobilised all over the world to get food, medical aid and other supplies to the millions left homeless in the disaster zone. The generosity shown towards the victims of the tsunami disaster by, say the people of the USA, were not Bush administration "values", which Colin Powell, US Secretary of State, seemed to imply during his damage limitation exercise in Indonesia, but rather the basic values of human beings in America, indeed, the world over, who had been motivated by the sorry plight of their fellows overseas.

Unlike other animals, humans are endowed with the ability to sympathise and empathise with their fellow humans. Humans derive great pleasure from doing good, are at their best when faced with the worst and will go to extraordinary lengths to help alleviate the suffering of others.

Right across the US, as in many other countries, there were all manner of fundraising events, in all sections of society, inclusive of nursery schools, prisons, universities and impoverished communities. In some instances people queued for over an hour to put money in a plastic collection bucket. People raised hundreds of millions of dollars to help people they had never met before, nor knew anything of, and it was the same during the Ethiopian Famine of 1985 and again last year, with millions around the world mobilising to help the starving of Africa.

Several years ago, when the Yangtze River in China threatened to burst its banks, seven million people came out and began to fill sand bags, pillow cases, anything, to build up the fragile river banks, the breaching of which threatened their communities.

Here in Britain, and indeed elsewhere, millions attend donor centres to give blood - usually every 17 weeks. Others put themselves on bone marrow registers and carry donor cards. All of this to help people they know they will never meet.

There have been cases where a small animal, a cat or puppy, sometimes even a child has become lodged in some deep underground pipe. Hundreds of people have mobilised to rescue it - fire crews, ambulance personnel, engineers, rescue services of every description. Contractors have freely sent in mechanical diggers. In most cases these people work endlessly, sometimes for days on end, sometimes without sleep, more often than not unpaid, until the cat or dog or the small child is rescued. You can't get near the site for TV crews and newspaper camera men - all desperate to capture the 'human interest' story, in the knowledge that this makes big news (as well as profits for the newspapers and TV networks, it must be said).

So the evidence hardly suggests that humans are selfish, greedy and aggressive. Indeed, if this was the case, if we could just not help ourselves, then we would very much see the type of court case we began this episode with far more often.

What most critics of human nature are actually referring to is human behaviour, behaviour exhibited in varying circumstances, and sometimes this reveals humans to be displaying behaviour that is aggressive or selfish.

For instance, if you go to Newcastle on a Saturday afternoon you'll see thousands of people out shopping, strolling along quietly, minding their own business. Return ten hours later when the

“What most critics of human nature are actually referring to is human behaviour”



When the tsunami struck, 'selfish' humans queued for hours to put money in buckets for people they had never met.

pubs and night clubs empty, when the same streets are full of drunken youths and you'll see behaviour that is quite blatantly aggressive and anti-social. This is not natural aggression, but aggression which is arising because the normal functioning of thousands of brains is being

upset by an overdose of the chemical alcohol and other drugs taken during the course of the evening as these young workers try to unwind after a stressful week at work.

Anti-social behaviour is also influenced by our social circumstances at any given time, i.e., when we are poor, depressed, lonely, afraid, angry or frustrated - sometimes a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion arising from abnormal and unfamiliar circumstances.

Socialists maintain that human behaviour is shaped in general by our surroundings, our circumstances, by the kind of system people are conditioned to live in - that it is not our consciousness that determines our social existence but our social existence which determines our consciousness. Nobody, for example, is born a racist or a patriot, a bigot, or with a belief in gods - this has to be learned. Nobody is born a murderer, a robber or a rapist, and our

assumed greed for money is no more a function of the natural human thought process than were slavery or witch burning.

Ordinarily, the reactionary ideas the common people hold have been acquired

second-hand, passed down from the ruling class above us. This is because, as Marx observed, the class which owns and controls the productive process also controls the intellectual life process in general.

In most cases, those who produce the world's wealth (some 95 percent of the world's population) have had that second-rate education that makes free-thought difficult - an upbringing that conditions us to accept without question the ideas of our betters and superiors. Indeed, the education system is geared to perpetuate the rule of an elite, insofar as it never encourages children to question and take issue with the status quo. Children may well cite that 8 times 8 equals 64, but how many will ask about the cause of wars or query the destruction of food? Moreover, the master class is allowed to hold onto power by controlling exactly what we think to the point that we imbibe a false class consciousness and readily acquiesce in our own exploitation. They control the TV, the radio, the newspapers, the schools. They perpetuate ideas that become so ubiquitous many people accept them as their own, uncritically. Many of these ideas are reactionary and, once imbibed, provide fertile soil for other reactionary ideas.

Socialists hold that because we can adapt our behaviour, the desire to cooperate should not be viewed as illogical. We hold that humans are, "by nature", cooperative and that we work best when faced with the worst and that our humanity shines through when the odds are stacked against us. Today, world capitalism threatens the human race with extinction. The reason this obnoxious system survives is because we have been conditioned to accept it, not born to perpetuate it.

Rest assured: no gene inclines us to defend the profit system. ■
JOHN BISSETT

Asylum: from pillar to post and back

It is not good news for Chu Hua (*'At the Bottom of the Heap'*, February *Socialist Standard*). She came from China hoping for asylum but her application was turned down and she was forbidden to find a job or claim benefit, which reduced her to living off friends or getting involved in something illegal - like selling counterfeit DVDs. That was why she appeared in court, threatened with a prison sentence - which probably persuaded her to take her chances elsewhere by going on the run.

This is where the bad news begins. On 28 May the Crown Court at Guildford sent a 34 year old man called Ling Cheng to prison for six months. Like Chu Hua, he is a rejected asylum seeker from China and, again like her, his offence - for the fourth time - was selling counterfeit DVDs. This case highlighted the uncomfortable fact that the manufacture and selling of illegal DVDs is dominated by organised gangs of Chinese. Gangs which make money in ways which are illegal - in the sense that they don't actually conform to the type of theft and extortion which capitalism thrives on - often assert their territorial or commercial integrity with extreme violence. In other words anyone who does not do as they say or who tries to muscle in on their territory is liable to be subjected to organised punishment beating or even killings. Chu Hua would be desperately vulnerable to that - it was not why she came to England.

Deportation

Worse news for Chu Hua was that when Ling Cheng was in court there was already an order that he should be deported back to China (although luckily for him the Chinese government had refused to take him, which means he had avoided a fate even worse than trying to scrape a livelihood in England out of nothing). If Chu Hua were also sent back to China she could well be tortured or executed. Her asylum application was based on the fact that she is a member of the Fa Lun Gong cult, which the Chinese government regards as dangerously subversive of their style of capitalism and of the discipline they need to impose on their workers if that country is to maintain its

bid to become one of the great competitors of world capitalism. This is why members of Fa Lun Gong have been imprisoned, beaten and killed.

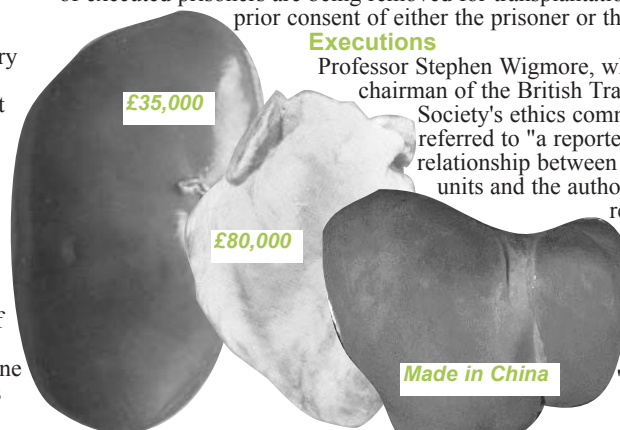
As if this is not menacing enough for Chu Hua, there has recently been some news about the Chinese government's keen interest in the profit prospects of the international trade in human organs - and the lengths they are willing to go to in order to get a slice of the market. There is a world shortage of some transplant organs and plenty of desperately sick people who will pay a great deal for one. A kidney costs around £35,000, a heart about £80,000. Among the organisations which openly advertise their wares there are transplant centres in China running websites which promise to supply most organs quickly - a kidney can be had within four weeks, some viscera almost immediately. Perhaps the people whose lives depend on a quick transplant will not ask themselves too many searching questions about the origins of the organ they are buying and why it should be available so quickly. For them, a recent statement by the British Transplant Society should have made disturbing reading:

"an accumulating body of evidence suggests that the organs of executed prisoners are being removed for transplantation without the prior consent of either the prisoner or their family."

Executions

Professor Stephen Wigmore, who is chairman of the British Transplant Society's ethics committee, has referred to "a reported close relationship between transplant units and the authorities

regulating executions and the availability of organs" in China and says that "The weight



of evidence has accumulated to a point over the last few months where it's really incontrovertible in our opinion". He told BBC Radio Five Live that the speed with which patients and donors in China are matched must imply that prisoners were being selected before execution to give up their organs. Motoring enthusiasts may see some similarities between this and their expectation of popping down to the local breaker's yard to buy a salvaged part for a damaged car.

The government of China lays claim to it being a socialist country. Leaving aside the fact that this is a contradiction in terms, the truth is that that country exhibits some of the crueller, more repressive characteristics of life under capitalism. It is common for prisoners in China to be subjected to the humiliation and terror of a public sentencing rally. Of all the countries where the death sentence operates China is easily the most active; according to Amnesty International 3,400 people were executed there in 2005 - about 90 per cent of the total world wide. (Iran was in second place, a long way behind with 160). The number of executions in China can only be estimated as it is an official state secret. Some judge it to be far higher than Amnesty, for example one delegate at the National People's Congress put the figure nearer 10,000. In addition there is an unusually wide definition of capital crime, encompassing corruption and repeat instances of minor, or attempted, offences.

Terror

That definition also includes membership of the Fa Lun Gong, which the Chinese government is trying to wipe out. Supporters of the Fa Lun Gong say that members of the cult have been held at a labour camp near a town called Shenyang before being put to death so that their organs could be sold. It was to escape this kind of terror that Chu

Hua made her way to England and eventually to the court where she was under threat of imprisonment for selling those DVDs - an offence which in China would almost certainly have resulted in her being executed. She went on the run from the court a few months ago and seems to be still at large. Perhaps she decided that after all she would be better off back in China. Either way it is not good news for her or for the people of the world, who are capable of organising human affairs much better than this. ■

IVAN



Chinese executing a woman in Tibet

Time for capitalism to go

Up until the time when capitalism had created the potential for the establishment of a truly socially democratic society it had, despite its awful costs in terms of human misery, been a progressive system. Inevitably, like earlier social systems, class interest, and the power and influence to enforce that interests, makes it resistant to change and inevitably it became a reactionary, anti-social system.

But its rules and its values predominate in our world establishing their own social morality and we cannot judge capitalists by the social morality of an equitable system predicated on human need when such a system does not yet exist. Indeed the nature of capitalism, its response to competition, its compulsion for expansion and its imperative for profit, gives it a dynamic beyond the control of either those who profit from it or those who suffer under it.

The capitalist class does not seek to create things like unemployment as a punishment on the working class - after all its profits ensue from the wealth created by employed workers. The capitalist class does not want wars and the colossal costs which are a burden on taxation which, in turn, is a charge on the surplus value accruing to the capitalist class. The capitalist class does not want crime (other than the 'legal' variety it itself perpetrates!) which, like armaments and wars, are a charge on capital. Capitalism would be a more secure and socially restful system without the multiplicity of evils it creates but its nature precludes human control even by the capitalists or their political agents and within itself it is a system of fiercely conflicting interests.

Political unanimity within the capitalist class is limited to the need to protect its class interests. Individual capitalists might feel constrained towards some charity or amelioration of some facet of a situation the system creates but such a response to social 'conscience' does not question the values and the priorities of the system itself and certainly the capitalist class, like their historical predecessors, are hostile to the idea of revolutionary change. That change - again, like previous socially revolutionary changes - must be the work, and, thus, the politics, of those on whom capitalist exploitation is based: the working class.

Even if they wanted to - which of course they don't - the capitalists could not institute the next phase in the social evolution of human society. That job is the task of the working class, not because of its

'moral' superiority but because of its overwhelming numerical superiority and its historic imperative.

Foot soldiers

Previous social revolutions have occurred when the political and economic basis of a new phase of social evolution have matured in the womb of the old society and the means used has been the physical overthrow of the dominant class by the class representing the new phase for which history has prepared it.

The situation that determines the means of social revolution in modern capitalism is, however, markedly different in several respects to that of earlier societies and earlier revolutions. The purpose of these latter was to overthrow an existing minority class and replace it with another minority class in order that the new class could establish political conditions that would facilitate a new mode of production. The chattel slave and the feudal slave may each in turn have been the foot soldiers of revolution but only the conditions of their slavery was changed.

There is now no further minority class interests pressing the norms and social structures of capitalism for new relations in the mode of production and the working class can not turn the system on its head and carry through a revolution that would allow it to exploit the relatively small capitalist class!

At this stage we should define in general terms - because it is only thus it can be defined - what we mean by the working class. We mean all those who in order to live are obliged to sell their physical or mental abilities to an employer for a wage, salary or commission. Within that context there is a great variety of income but the common denominator is the compulsion to be and to remain a hired hand. Conversely, a capitalist can be defined as someone who can live by profit, rent or interest and who works only if he or she wishes to do so. Again, as with the working class, there is a great variety of income within the capitalist class and there are occasional situations that do not lend themselves to this form of categorisation but it is the only form of general classification that fits the situation as it is.

Capitalism made production social; now history imposes on the working class the task of making distribution social which is the sole means by which the myriad problems of society can be resolved. It is this change to social distribution that establishes socialism and the politics

governing the revolutionary role of the working class in bringing about this change is not only conditioned by the nature of the change itself but distinct from all previous revolutionary changes in the social organisation of society.

End of buying and selling

This can best be appreciated by an understanding of what socialism involves. Briefly, socialism will be a system of society in which the means of life, the entire productive and distributive resources, will be owned and democratically controlled by society as a whole on the principle of "from each according to their ability and to each in accordance with their self-determined need". The establishment of that principle will mean that the wages system will be ended as will buying and selling and, hence the need for money as a means of exchange.

It needs little thought to appreciate all the wasteful functions that capitalism's buying and selling world makes necessary. Hundreds of millions of people are currently occupied in jobs and in entire industries that would disappear with the ending of the marketing system. Similarly, with the ending of competition for markets, resources and areas of strategic interest, the cause of wars would no longer exist; armed forces and the vast and wasteful array of weaponry these employ would be redundant. Equally, in a world of free access to needs most crimes would disappear along with the personnel on both sides of that industry.

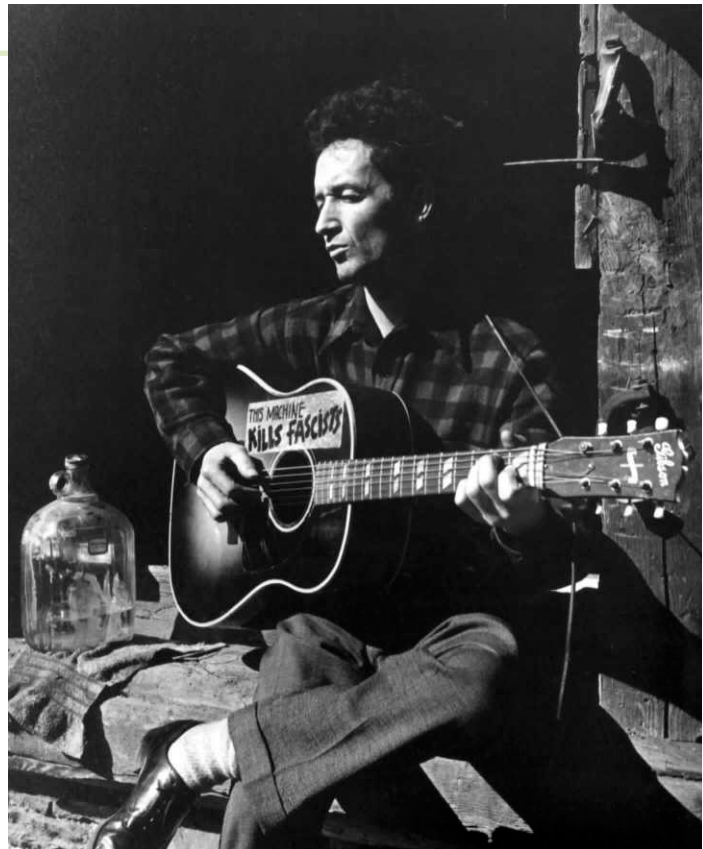
Whereas in capitalist society the ending of hundreds of millions of jobs would be ruinous, in socialism the freed workers could be absorbed into the workforce ensuring firstly that the social infrastructure needed to end the appalling poverty that currently afflicts the lives of billions of people throughout the world could be speedily ended. Thereafter, they would augment the workforce to lighten the burden of producing the goods and services needed in their communities and elsewhere.

It will be obvious that the society here envisaged could only be established and maintained on the broadest voluntary human co-operation. Once established it will create, like all other forms of social organisation its own social conventions affecting human behaviour. Initially, the 'politics' of its revolutionary establishment

will require the endorsement of the overwhelming majority organised consciously within the general ambience of a political movement. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE

Woody Guthrie: Resonant Voice for the Downtrodden or Woolly-Eyed Lefty?



Curious things were afoot in Greenwich Village, New York City around the year 1960. Drove of earnest denim-clad youths could be observed traversing the streets, all affecting the same hunched posture and shuffling gait. From every clenched jaw a king-size sprouted and (curiouser and curiously) each throat emitted the same sporadic dry cough. One such *poseur*, a Minnesotan balladeer, Robert Zimmerman, would presently win universal acclaim as Bob Dylan.

Curiously too, the template for all those cardboard cut-outs also happened to be in the vicinity. Just across the Hudson River, those five years past, he had languished in New Jersey's Greystone State Institute. His name was Woody Guthrie.

As writer, broadcaster, political activist and composer of some one thousand songs, Guthrie had been famous long before the birth of any of his young impersonators although this had since faded and, anyway, was always heavily laced with both controversy and notoriety. Why then was an ailing, ageing figure suddenly the focus of such adulation that the very hackings of his tobacco-added bronchial tubings were deemed worthy of reproduction?

Woodrow Wilson Guthrie was born in 1912 into a tragedy-prone family in Omaha, Oklahoma, being named in honour of the Democratic contender and President-to-be. Guthrie senior was an opportunistic businessman and Ku Klux Klan member whose racist views his son ingested and held well into adulthood. Mother, an unstable woman, was destined to die in the "insane asylum" from the hereditary condition then known as Huntington's Chorea. In her more lucid moments however, she bequeathed Woody her rich musical heritage. She sang to him ballads of farmers, of sailors, of the humble triumphs and sorrows of ordinary people; an art-form that decades later, would find itself neatly sanitised, packaged, and marketed as "folk" music. At conception, unknowingly, she had also bequeathed him the Huntington's genes.

Inevitably, this upbringing left its

mark and young Guthrie developed into a decidedly maverick adult; as erratic in his business affairs as he was neglectful of his several wives, his numerous children, his personal presentation and hygiene. He developed also an enduring, and endearing, aversion to money, observing that "getting it turned people into animals and losing it drove them crazy". Money to him was only ever a means of satisfying immediate requirements; any surplus being promptly squandered. At the height of his fame he would spurn lucrative contracts with the same panache that had seen his younger self regularly bestow entire evenings' busking tips upon any convenient vagrant whose needs he perceived to exceed his own.

The final disintegration of the family

“the IWW provided Guthrie with a simplistic political consciousness beyond which he never materially developed”

unit saw a teenage Guthrie embark on an itinerant life, hitching rides and hopping freight trains across America, using his musical skills to access life's basic necessities. He dosed in railway boxcars, under bridges, in hobo encampments, all the while adding to his repertoire. This would later constitute much of the romantic "Hard Travellin'" Guthrie legend but in reality it was a precarious existence, with regular harassment from the authorities; the next meal or bed a constant preoccupation.

There were an estimated 200,000 drifters and migratory workers during the

1920s, a figure which increased drastically in the 1930s as first the effects of the Great Depression then the Oklahoma Dust Bowl, bit deeper. This latter calamity, so graphically portrayed in Steinbeck's magnificent novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, saw entire communities forced off the barren land and on to the highways. Guthrie was both moved by their plight and angered by the hostility shown towards them; the taunt "Okie" so widely used that it swiftly became the generic term for all "poor-white" destitutes.

Round the hobo campfires, Guthrie encountered grizzled, broken men; erstwhile members of the Industrial Workers of the World, muttering about there being a class struggle within society between the "rich" capitalists and the "poor" workers. In the finest of leftist traditions, the IWW had been a chaotic outfit with little idea of what actually constituted socialism, nor indeed how it might be established; violent strike action and sabotage being foremost amongst its strategies. Its nickname, "Wobblies" was indeed apt.

The propaganda potential of both music and humour was however, recognised and its *Little Red Songbook*, largely parodies of Salvationist hymns, contained such gems as "The Pious Itinerant (Hallelujah I'm a Bum)" and "In the Sweet By-and-By" with its irreverent promise of "pie in the sky when you die".

If nothing else, the IWW provided Guthrie with a simplistic political consciousness beyond which he never materially developed. More significantly, it lent a focus to his growing anger and taking his cue from the songbook, began creating his own material. In an anthology, "Dust Bowl Ballads", he berated the "Vigilante Man" who would "shoot his brothers and sisters down", lampooned the bungling incompetence of "these here politicians" in "Dust Bowl Blues" and mocked the preacher who, having first pocketed the collection, abandoned his flock with a "So Long it's Been Good to Know Ya".

Settling down briefly around 1937,

Guthrie worked with the radical Los Angeles radio station KFVD. Here his racism underwent transformation; a Negro listener labelling him "unintelligent" for performing his "Nigger Blues" over the airwaves. Guthrie had used the term casually since childhood and was mortified. He apologised unreservedly, expunging the disgusting word forthwith from his vocabulary - although the "Japs" and "Wops" did continue to catch it in the neck for some time to come.

Back on his travels, it seemed to his open, if blinkered eyes that those striving hardest to assist the Okie refugees were "communists". The American Communist Party had been founded in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution by an enclave of native radicals, Wobblies and immigrant Europeans, all mistakenly identifying it as somehow connected with the establishment of socialism - the reality being that it was simply one more chapter in the global triumph of capitalism over feudalism, taking in this instance, the form of state capitalism.

Routinely persecuted by a nervous government, it endured as a zealous, paranoid sect, but as the "Roaring Twenties" gave way to the "Hungry Thirties" following the 1929 Wall Street Crash, it effected some popular headway by depicting the apparent success of Stalin's "planned" Soviet economy, with unemployment (officially at least) non-existent.

Then, following the Nazi triumph in Germany and the growth of Fascism elsewhere, the 1935 World Congress of the Communist International urged member parties to forgo their "ideological purity" and unite with other leftists in a Popular Front against this menace. Accordingly, the Party began to "Americanize", becoming active, indeed dominant, in the labour union movement and supporting the 1936 election of "progressive" Franklin D. Roosevelt.

This then was the organisation that Guthrie embraced. Whilst never adopting actual membership, he sang at party rallies and contributed a rather folksy column, "Woody Sez", to its journal, *Peoples' World*.

"I ain't a communist necessarily," he quipped, "but I've been in the red all my life."

The Hitler/Stalin non-aggression treaty of August 1939 which caused such heartache for the Party faithful (and headache for its leadership), troubled Guthrie not the slightest. With the Popular Front now summarily dispatched, he blithely swallowed the spluttered explanation that Russia was simply pro-peace; not pro-Fascist. It was Roosevelt, instantly transmogrified from hero to villain, who was trying to drag America into conflict on behalf of British imperialism. "Pact sets peace example", proclaimed the *Peoples' World*.

And when the "peace-loving" Red Army invaded Eastern Poland shortly afterwards, why, they were merely liberating the place. "Stalin," sang Guthrie, "stepped in and gave the land back to the farmers."

The German attack on Russia in June 1941 meant about-turn yet again and with America's entry into the war six months later following Pearl Harbour, the Party became in a trice the most fervently patriotic of institutions; union organisation and strike action now subordinated to the overriding imperative for military success. "Sure," reasoned our Woody, "the Communists change policy, but so do the Democrats and Republicans."

Victory secured, the western alliance quickly foundered. Stalin denounced his former bedfellows as worse than Hitler, Churchill responded with his "Iron Curtain" speech and the Cold War was underway.

In an era of low unemployment and rising wages, the American left found itself in decline. Labour unions were now established in society, requiring pension fund managers rather than militants and among the newly-consumerist working class, a fear prevailed that its relative prosperity might be in jeopardy from leftism. Guthrie too was in decline, succumbing by degrees to the lingering horrors of Huntington's Disease, dying eventually in 1967.

By the late 1950s, further societal change was underway. Following Eisenhower's 1954 election, the "Great Red Scare" was evaporating and in the emerging teenage generation, an intellectual curiosity and idealism could be discerned, transcending the parochialism and acquisitiveness of its War-era parents. Political activism, particularly in the Civil Rights Movement reawakened and nonconformity of sorts, became acceptable.

Guthrie had somehow filtered into the "radical psyche" as a free-wandering spirit representing all things open, honest and unmaterialistic. His songs began to be listened to.

Tin Pan Alley too, had its role to play and profits to consolidate. Rock 'n' Roll had arrived some years earlier and had proved anathema to "White Middle America", a subversive presence inciting youthful rebelliousness and promiscuity; the term itself Negro slang for sexual intercourse. For the first time, black musicians, Little Richard, Chuck Berry and others were accessing mass white audiences. Could the unthinkable happen and integration ensue?

Clean-cut Caucasians - the Kingston Trio, Peter, Paul and Mary etc, - churning out "folk" songs seemed a much safer option and from record stores everywhere wafted bowdlerised versions of *Oklahoma Hills* and *This Land is Your Land* - to the joyful ringing accompaniment of the cash register.

Woody Guthrie was never a socialist in any scientific sense of the word. He was however, manifestly "socialistic" in his whole outlook on life. "This land," he sang "was made for you and me" and the fruits of his "Pastures of Plenty", rightfully everyone's.

He once wrote, "The worst thing that can happen is to cut loose from people and the best thing is to vaccinate yourself right into their blood... We have to get together and work and fight for everybody." Hardly apocalyptic, but nonetheless sentiments with which socialists will heartily agree. ■

ANDREW ARMITAGE



Cooking the Books (2)

The nutty philosopher

"Tax breathing, not chocolate cake" ran the headline in the *Times* (30 May) of an article by a certain Jamie

White, who was billed as "a philosopher". It didn't say of what but he seems to be a philosopher of taxation.

In any event, he advanced the view that the best things to tax are things people are prepared to pay for irrespective of the price. When the price of cakes reaches a certain level people will stop buying them, but whatever level a hypothetical price of air would reach people would still buy it.

"Privatising the air is the ideal solution", wrote the philosopher. "Alas, it is difficult to arrange".

Alas, be buggered. Fortunately, it is impossible to arrange. Not that some enterprising capitalist wouldn't seek to own and sell air if they could, as in the nightmare situation envisaged by Owen in Robert

Tressell's classic novel *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*:

"They have monopolized everything that it is possible to monopolize; they have got the whole earth, the minerals in the earth and the streams that water the earth. The only reason they have not monopolized the daylight and the air is that it is not possible to do it. If it were possible to construct huge gasometers and to draw together and compress within them the whole of the atmosphere, it would have been done long ago, and we should have been compelled to work for them in order to get money to buy air to breathe. And if that seemingly impossible thing were accomplished tomorrow, you would see thousands of people dying for want of air - or of the money to buy it - even as now thousands are dying from want of other necessities of life. You would see people going about gasping for breath, and telling each other that the likes of them could not expect to have air to breathe unless they had the money to pay for it" (chapter 15).

While only a nutty professor would argue that the private ownership of air was an "ideal solution", most people today

accept that the private ownership of the productive resources needed for life - land, water, minerals and the instruments needed to fashion them into useful things - is reasonable. Actually, from the view of meeting human needs, it is a quite unreasonable solution.

Why should the land, water and the other things that are just as essential to life as air be privately owned any more than the air we breathe? Why should a section of society be in a position to hold the rest of us to ransom and say "unless you work for us (for less than you produce) you can't have access to what you need to live?"

Of course they shouldn't. All the means and instruments of production should belong in common to the whole community as the only basis on which they can be used to satisfy the needs of every member of society.

The good news is that White will be regarded as a fruit cake by most supporters of capitalism too. Even Madame Thatcher balked at the free buying and selling of body parts, inconsistent with her own nutty philosophy as this was.

Porritt remodels capitalism

Capitalism As if the World Matters.
Jonathon Porritt. Earthscan. 304 pages.
£18

Capitalism can be reformed so as to be compatible with achieving an environmentally sustainable society. That's the view put forward by Jonathon Porritt (right), well-known Green and unofficial political adviser to HRH Prince Charles (as he refers to him in his latest book) which presents a version of capitalism that is supposed to allow it to function while taking ecological considerations properly into account, which it doesn't do today.

What would a society have to be like to be environmentally sustainable? Basically, says Porritt (and we can agree), this would be a society whose methods of providing for the needs of its members did not use up non-renewable resources quicker than renewable substitutes for them could be found; did not use up renewal resources quicker than nature could reproduce them; and did not release waste into nature quicker than the environment's ability to absorb it. (Porritt himself adds - and we'd be the last to disagree, even though it ups the bar considerably - that it would have to be a society in which "human needs are met worldwide".) If these practices are abided by, then the relationship and interactions between human society and the rest of nature would be able to continue on a long-term basis - would be able to be "sustained" - without harming or degrading the natural environment on which humans depend.

Socialists contend that these practices could be systematically applied only within the context of the Earth's natural and industrial resources being the common heritage of all humanity under democratic control. In other words, we place ourselves unambiguously in the camp of those who argue that capitalism and a sustainable relationship with the rest of nature are not compatible. The excessive consumption of both renewal and non-renewable resources and the release of waste that nature can't absorb that currently go on are not just accidental but an inevitable result of capitalism's very nature.

Capitalism is a society in which:

- (1) nearly all new wealth is produced for sale on a market;
- (2) money is invested in production with a view to obtaining a monetary profit;
- (3) those who produce the new wealth are exploited in that the source of profits is work they are not paid for;
- (4) production is regulated by the market via a competitive struggle between separately-owned enterprises for profits;
- (5) capital is accumulated out of profits in the form of new means of production, leading to the growth both of what can be produced and what is actually produced;

To which it can be added that capitalism exists as a single global system and not as a collection of separate national capitalisms.

Porritt accepts all of these as features of capitalism except point 3 (of course). His case is that if the government set the limits within which the market, the pursuit of profits, separately-owned enterprises and

competition operated, these could operate to allow an environmentally sustainable society. According to him, capitalism and environmental sustainability "are only compatible under certain conditions (it isn't



capitalism per se that is at issue here, but which particular model of capitalism)". He therefore subscribes to "a 'reform from within' strategy: identify those characteristics of today's dominant capitalist paradigm that most damagingly impede progress towards sustainability and set out to change them through the usual levers - government intervention, consumer preference, international diplomacy, education and so on".

In short, a classic reformist strategy. This is based on the assumption that "today's dominant capitalist paradigm" is only one of a number of different possible capitalist "paradigms" or "models". But the evidence is against this: there is not a range of different models of capitalism from which government can pick the one they prefer. Capitalism is a single, organic whole (to use a term Greens will understand), functioning to pursue and accumulate profits, which cannot be remodelled mechanically. Past attempts to re-form capitalism in this sort of way, as for instance by the Labour Party and similar parties in other countries, have shown that, if there's capitalism, it imposes its priorities - profit, competitiveness, accumulation - over all other considerations, and that in the end governments have no choice but to go along with this.

Rather than Labour-type parties changing capitalism it has been the other way round. These parties have ended up accepting that priority has to be given to capitalism's priorities. The same is beginning to happen to the Greens, who have already participated in the government of capitalism in a number of European countries. In fact, Porritt's own shift of position could be seen as a sign of this, though it can be admitted that some of the earlier Green positions he used to espouse but has now abandoned - such as "zero growth" and that decentralised local communities could solve global problems - were never tenable.

One of the ways in which Porritt suggests that governments could achieve a "a market-based model of sustainable

capitalism" would be to force the competing enterprises to treat natural resources as if they were capital, subject to depreciation which had to be accounted for in monetary terms. He talks of "natural capital", while acknowledging that even some Greens find treating nature as an economic category with a price-tag abhorrent.

All governments set as a policy goal increasing the "Gross Domestic Product" (GDP) of the country they govern. GDP is supposed to be a measure of the new value produced in a country in the course of a year. (Actually, strictly speaking, this should be Net National Product since GDP includes an element for depreciation and replacement of used-up fixed capital, which is not really new value.) This aim of governments is an unconscious reflection of the logic of capitalism since the new value created over and above what is consumed during the same period of time is the source of new capital which capitalism is driven to accumulate.

Endless "growth" (even if in fits and starts) - and the growing consumption of nature-given materials this involves - is built in to capitalism. However, this is not the growth of useful things as such but rather the growth of money-values, which is only indirectly the growth of things since money-value can only be embodied in things (not that all of these things are useful from a human point of view, even if they are within capitalist society, such as bombs and automatic cash machines).

Porritt cites the first law of thermodynamics ("energy is neither created nor destroyed as it is changed from one form to another") to make the point that the production of wealth is not the creation of new material; it is merely a transformation of existing material that either comes directly from nature or originally did so into something useful or considered useful to human life (the definition of "wealth"). The material substratum of wealth comes from nature but, because it is not itself the product of labour, it has no value in the capitalist economic sense. Marx was fond of quoting the 17th century writer Sir William Petty's remark that labour is the father and nature the mother of wealth. The problem is that, as under capitalism it is only labour that confers an economic value, nature is neglected when it comes to economic calculations and the operation of the economy.

Porritt complains that "we show nothing but contempt for the contribution from nature, valuing it at zero as some kind of free gift or subsidy" and that, as a result, "today's dominant paradigm of capitalism" leads to the plundering of non-renewable resources (such as oil and minerals) and the over-harvesting of renewable ones (such as fish and forests).

This is true but his proposed solution - to take into account the non-renewed consumption of natural material as a negative amount when calculating GDP, as an incentive to cut back on it as a way of avoiding a reduction in GDP - is merely mucking about with the thermometer while leaving the real world unchanged. In the real world, which GDP merely attempts to measure, the competing enterprises would still only take into account as a cost what they had to pay for. As it costs no labour to produce natural materials (only to extract or

harvest them, not to create them), whether or not they are renewed doesn't enter into the calculation. If enterprises were forced to artificially take into account using up non-renewed natural resources in their business accounts, that would distort the calculation of the rate of profit which is the key economic indicator for capitalism. Mucking about with that under capitalism would cause all sorts of problems.

There is no way round this under capitalism, which simply cannot be remodelled or reformed on this point. To be fair, Porritt does concede that he could be wrong about capitalism and environmental sustainability and muses how bad it would be "to be committed to a reform agenda if the system one sought to reform was inherently incapable of accommodating the necessary changes in the first place". Actually, this is precisely his case. This being so, he ought to draw the conclusion which he says then imposes itself:

"If, as a politically active environmentalist or campaigner for social justice, one's answer to the question is that they are, indeed, mutually exclusive (that capitalism, in whichever manifestation, is in its very essence inherently unsustainable), then one's only morally consistent response is to devote one's political activities to the overthrow of capitalism".

We have nothing to add.

ADAM BUICK

Corrections

Political trainspotters will have noticed the mistake in the part of last month's Greasy Pole devoted to Margaret Beckett when we said she "once savaged Neil Kinnock for his refusal to back Tony Blair against Denis Healey for the Deputy Party leadership". The Tony in question was of course Benn not Blair. Our apologies.

Also last month, in reply to a letter on "redirecting production to meet needs", we wrote that "it has been suggested that world food production would have to be increased by at least 60 percent to get to a position of sufficiency for everybody on the planet". To avoid misunderstanding, this suggestion referred to more than basic food needs. Total food production even today is theoretically enough, if evenly divided, to prevent anyone dying of starvation. "Enough food is now produced worldwide to provide sufficient calories for all humans, but distribution is uneven and inequitable" (http://uk.encyarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761576477/Food_Supply_World.html#3). Of course, in socialism, with the artificial scarcity and organised waste of capitalism gone, enough food will be able to be produced to provide a more than adequate diet for all.

The editorial in April stated that "real power today does not lie in elected bodies but in the hands of those who own the world's wealth". This was a reference to the power to take economic decisions not to political power - the power to set the machinery of state in motion - which is in the hands of governments ultimately responsible to elected bodies, even if used today in the interest of those who own the world's wealth since those currently elected support and sustain capitalism.

Freud, at least in terms of his theoretical conclusions, had a somewhat pessimistic view of human nature, and in this sense saw things differently from socialists. However, I believe that this should be set against Freud's compassionate acceptance of human weakness and limitation, and in this respect, I believe, Freud and Marx were soul mates. Many of their peers would have been happy to regard the hysterical men and women as well as the poor oppressed masses as both, each in their own way, the cause of their own misfortune. Freud and Marx regarded them as fellow human beings, championed their causes, and sought to relieve them from their suffering. In doing so they both went completely against the grain of the societies they lived in, and for that bravery of spirit alone, deserve our gratitude and respect. The idea that people are the cause of their own misfortune is a central argument of those on the political right. This is particularly so in America where it's even accepted by many of those who suffer as a result of it. The idea is that whether someone is emotionally disturbed, or mentally ill, or a single mother, or lacks the skills, strength, or ability to get a well paying job, they are somehow supposed to have chosen to be exactly as they are. Giving them no support is then justified on the grounds that they could choose to somehow magically change themselves and their circumstances if they really wanted to. It's interesting to note that these right-wingers choose to see emotional and economic difficulties in a very similar way.

Freud and Marx would have been united in opposing this absurd idea. Freud would have pointed out that people with emotional problems are victims of their own natures and certainly don't choose to be the way they are. I don't need to say what Marx would have said about the source of economic hardship.

In spite of the huge differences in their areas of interests there are quite a number of ways in which Freud and Marx parallel one another. They were both big fans of Darwin and saw themselves as doing work in a similar vein to him. For an explanation of how Marx's views on religion correspond to Freud's ideas about paranoia see *Paranoia* by David Bell. This is an excellent little booklet which I thoroughly recommend. It gives a brilliant explanation of "false communities", racism, hatred of asylum seekers, resentment welfare recipients, etc. from a psychoanalytic point of view.

Psychoanalysis has a tremendous amount to offer to anyone who wants to have a better understanding of human behaviour. I can't resist mentioning the books of Robert Jay Lifton in which he applies his background in psychoanalysis to the study of recent historical and political situations. Socialists should simply take from Freud and psychoanalysis whatever they find helpful or interesting and leave aside that which they don't.

ADAM WATERHOUSE, Bristol

Dear Editors

The article on 'Freud and Marx' (May *Socialist Standard*) was quite interesting and may lead some readers to study more of the works of Freud, Reich and Fromm. However, it appears to make the usual errors by critics of their pioneering work

Freud's discovery of psycho-analysis is used by the medical profession world-wide and has proved to be beneficial and

invaluable in treating patients with deep emotional difficulties.

The article states that "Instinctual Sexual Energy" has never been found. This is not the case. Any objective observation of older babies and very young children will demonstrate that they have a natural and "instinctive" sexual or sensual drive for genital play for long before they have any understanding or knowledge of sexual functioning.

While there have been advances in sexual liberation for adults, in recent years, this has not led to much improvement in social attitudes. There is a specific reason for this. Development in the first five years of life pass through the stages of oral, anal and genital evolution of pleasure zones.

By puberty, on average, girls are menstruating at 10 years of age and boys, on average, are ejaculating at 12 years. So physiologically they are ready for mating. This in our "Civilised" society is understandably unacceptable. So unlike all other living creatures, the "Sexual Instincts" must be repressed and thwarted.

Freud and Freudians understood this and suggested that a price in emotional terms would be made. Hence the 'Life and Death' instincts evolve that give rise to the emergence of all kinds of sexual perversions that can develop. These are also expressed in 'death' drives in addictions, such as drug taking, smoking, alcohol, etc. And as Wilhelm Reich proved, into homoerotic political diversions, such as fascist and nazi fantasies. (Study the Nazi symbols and expressions and the "death instinct" is self-evident.)

Sexuality or sensuality is the deepest natural emotional instinct all humans possess.

Most people, though unaware of their repressed emotions, are able to cope sufficiently in life.

It is essential, however, to understand the complexity of our personalities, if we are ever going to be able to create a fully successful socialist society that will be really lasting. For we are not machines or robots, but thinking animals with many emotional layers.

Just as the work of Marx is a guide to understanding, and not a dogma like religions. So also, is the work of Freud, Reich and Fromm.

LIONEL RICH, London NW6

Manchester

Monday 24 July, 8 pm

Discussion on Nationalism

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City centre.

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see page 3 for details

Obituary for Kevin Lennon

Members of North East Branch were saddened at news of the death of Kevin Lennon in March. Kevin had been a member of the Socialist Party since October 1979, almost 27 years. Anyone who ever met Kevin knew him as an activist above and beyond the call of duty - rain, snow or hail, he never missed branch meetings, indeed he was almost always the first one there, regardless of the location of the venue or how difficult it was to get there via public transport. He was always with us at demos and during election activity and always spoke his mind, with passion, on

subjects he felt strongly about.

Members who turned up for his funeral at Sunderland Crematorium found it painfully ironic that Kevin should be given a religious send off - a member of his family had said funerals were for the bereaved - for if there was one thing Kevin was famous for at branch meetings it was when someone raised the subject of religion and he'd rise to his feet, finger in the air, venting his spleen on Rome and Mecca. Again he very often turned up at meetings with some quote, or photocopied article on religion that he'd copied from a book in the local library and which he would use to reinforce his arguments. For Kevin, religion taught us to put out faith in Gods to help

sort out our problems, whereas, most of our problems being social and economic, rooted in the way we organise our world for production, we were more than capable of solving such problems and creating a paradise on earth - if only the workers could be convinced it was well within their capabilities to create such a world. He would often remark that if the time people spent praying over the past 100 years had have instead been spent campaigning for socialism, then we'd have a paradise on earth already.

Needless to say Kevin was much loved within the branch and each member has their own favourite anecdote of him.

John Bissett



Cat out of the bag

Upton Sinclair once wrote that "even Von Papen had to tell the truth sometimes, if only to rest his mind." The saying applies to all politicians. The time comes when even the most diplomatic will blurt out the real motives of the British ruling class.

For example, Sir Anthony Eden. At Norwich recently he said:

"The United Kingdom's vital interest in Cyprus is not confined to its N.A.T.O. aspect. Our country's industrial life and that of Western Europe depends to-day, and must depend for many years to come, on oil supplies from the Middle East. If ever our oil resources were in peril, we would be compelled to defend them. The facilities we need in Cyprus are part of that defence. We cannot, therefore,

accept any doubt about their availability." -(The Times, 2.6.56).

The Prime Minister here admits that British capitalism's need to protect its profits-which it could not do without oil supplies-comes before the promise which Britain has made, as a member of the United Nations, to uphold the principle of self-government. Socialists have been saying for a long time that



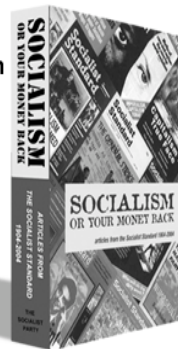
capitalism always puts profits before principle, but it is not often that a politician as eminent as Sir Anthony Eden confirms it so explicitly.

(From an article by Alwyn Edgar, *Socialist Standard*, July 1956)

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Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

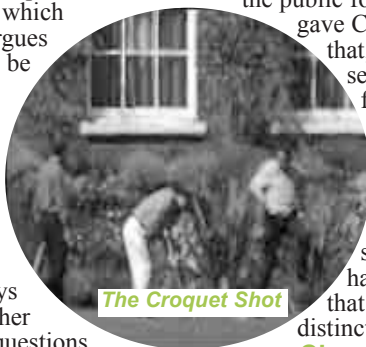


No grace without favour

Anyone whose memory is flavoured with a proper measure of vindictiveness will have little sympathy for the corpses of careers, once so promising, which crowd into the political morgues of capitalism. They will not be moved by tales of the bewilderment and distress experienced by the careerists at the dying of their ambitions. There will be no bereavement counselling for those who contemplate a bleak life without a platoon of flunkies to organise their days, to usher them unsullied by probing questions from one media-intensive exposure to another. No sympathetic third ear for those who pine for the emotional highs sprouting from a passage of adroit fencing across the Despatch Box. A stolid indifference will be shown to anyone grieving for red boxes and gleaming limousines, uniformed chauffeurs and swarming police escorts. And no glimmer of empathy will console previous inhabitants of the architectural jewels which are known as Grace and Favour Residences

Dorneywood

As almost everyone who can switch on a television set or read a newspaper knows, it was deputy Prime Minister John Prescott who, at a time when he must have been desperate to avoid any more bad publicity, swung the media searchlight onto the whole matter of grace and favour residences when he was snapped by a tabloid photographer playing croquet on the lawn of Dorneywood. Croquet - a game which needs immaculate turf, traditionally played by men and women in straw hats with hat bands in club colours. John Prescott, who is supposed to represent the interests of the people of Hull East, where croquet is not a popular game. John Prescott - who once decked a man at an election meeting for throwing an egg at him, who feeds copy to the parliamentary hacks by gabbling his Commons speeches in a riot of confused syllables, mangled words and malapropisms. Prescott the ocean going steward who angered Harold Wilson by being among the leaders of the 1966 seamen's strike. And all of this was played out on the immaculate turf of Dorneywood - Prescott's elegant grace and favour home in leafy Buckinghamshire. The tabloids were ecstatic, playing the game they know so well - making sure as many people as possible are aware of embarrassing facts which, no matter how trivial, can then be left to speak for themselves.



The Croquet Shot



Dorneywood

Grace and favour residences are big business, coming in a variety of sizes and shapes and being awarded for many different reasons. But none of these homes attract the same degree of attention as the few which are allocated to prominent politicians - "given to the nation" as a retreat for senior ministers where they can re-energise themselves after the exhausting business of trying to control British capitalism. Chequers is unique because it is reserved for the Prime Minister of the day, donated in 1917 for that purpose by Arthur Lee, the Tory MP for Faversham and later Lord Lee. The house nestles among the Chiltern Hills, easily visible from some of the public footpaths around about. Lee gave Chequers on the assumption that, consequent on the sequence of electoral reforms flowing from the Reform Bills, it could no longer be assumed that the Prime Minister would necessarily have their own landed estates. (At the time, some sections of the ruling class had not woken up to the fact that this was an unimportant distinction).

Chequers

Thatcher was enchanted by the place: "I do not think anyone has stayed long at Chequers without falling in love with it" she wrote - an assessment which would not have chimed in with the millions of workers who spend their lives in homes which, emphatically, they do not "fall in love with". Ted Heath was also fond of

Chequers and stayed there most weekends, although he was typically frustrated by the refusal of Arthur Lee's widow, who was allowed to live there until she died, almost forty years after Lee's death, to agree to the improvements he was impatient to make. Heath organised social events and concerts there, when his guests could enjoy the indoor swimming pool which was a gift from another rich benefactor. If Heath could see no irony in this, the same can be said about Tony Blair and his fondness for hosting events attended by fashionable stars of the media and the entertainment industry - Elton John, David Bowie, Richard and Judy. The publicity was a useful promotion of Blair's assumed credentials as a trendy - while he devoted himself to his mission to govern the rest of us in a distinctly outworn fashion.

Chevening, a grand house surrounded by a 3,500 acre estate, is now occupied by Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett - although what this will do to her well-known preference for caravan life is anybody's guess. The Earl of Stanhope left Chevening to "the nation" in 1967, specifying that it must be used by the Prime Minister, a Cabinet minister or a descendant of George VI. Prince Charles at first had his eye on it but then changed his mind; perhaps he was uneasy about being spoiled for choice. In fact Chevening, along with the now notorious Dorneywood, has



Chequers

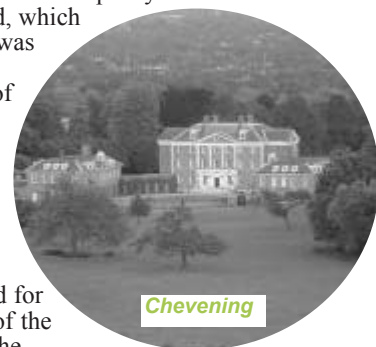
previously figured in events exposing the meaner, ruthless nature of a politician's ambitions and their perceived need to enforce recognition of their standing. When the scandal of Prescott's office affair first broke he was adamant that he would not be forced out of Dorneywood, clinging to the house as a symbol of his power and influence; to give it up would be to admit to a decline in his standing. It was not until the pressure on him became too intense, symbolised by those photographs of him leaning on his croquet mallet, that he changed his mind, in the hope that this would assuage his critics and so save his place in the government. It was rather like Arctic travellers trying to distract a pack of pursuing wolves by throwing chunks of meat off the sledge - except that in this case it was not human lives, but the vanity of an arrogant, discredited politician that was at stake.

Chevening

There has been another, equally illustrative and sickening, example in recent years. In July 1989 Thatcher had run out of patience with her Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe, on the grounds that "...his clarity of purpose and analysis had dimmed". (which meant that he had disagreed with her too often). When she came to sack him Howe was furious, partly because he would have to give up Chevening, where he was very comfortable. To prevent him becoming too much of a rebellious nuisance Thatcher offered him another post and occupancy of Dorneywood, which at that time was occupied by Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson. After a spell of bitter bargaining Howe settled for Leadership of the Commons, the meaningless title of Deputy Leader - and possession of Dorneywood. A Tory peer later raged at Woodrow Wyatt about Howe's behaviour and the fact that the reshuffle had been "...overshadowed by a squalid squabble about houses... Why didn't he keep his own house?": to which Wyatt replied "probably because he doesn't have any money and maybe he needed the money when he sold it". This sordid episode is a commentary on how devotedly our leaders protect their own interests while they savagely denounce any workers who dare to resist the constant pressure to depress their conditions.

John Prescott must have found it very satisfying to lord it over Dorneywood and its acres. It was, after all, tangible evidence that this man who took pride (and won a few votes) in being rough and ready had climbed so high up the greasy pole. All the more bitter the irony then, that the place should have triggered his downfall.

IVAN



Chevening





Voice from the Back

The Failure Of Reformism

We are opposed to trying to patch up capitalism, we always say that such reforms will end in failure. So often do we engage in attacking these schemes that cynical opponents have dubbed us the "we told you so" party. Now we have one of the reformers telling us that his reforms are useless. "Tony Blair began his Let's Talk initiative yesterday by admitting for the first time that both his Sure Start scheme for under-fives and policies for children in care have failed the socially excluded" (*Guardian*, 16 May). But he will carry on his task of patching up capitalism. "If we are to change that we need a different way for government to operate ..." When this "different way" ends in failure, remember - "we told you so".

A Mad Social System

The madness of capitalist production was recently illustrated by a European Commission directive to order nearly a billion bottles of French and Italian wine to be turned into fuel and disinfectant. "The commission's announcement that it would spend 2.4 million euros to distil 430 million bottles of French wine and 371 million bottles of Italian wine into fuel was met with protests by French wine growers ..." (*Times*, 8 June). Another 2.4 billion euros is to be spent digging up vineyards across the continent. Inside a socialist society wine like every other product will be produced to satisfy human needs not to make a profit. Jesus was supposed to have turned water into wine, but only capitalism would turn wine into disinfectant.



Try Workers' Wine - it tastes like disinfectant anyway

The Power Of Prayer

"Ken Lay, his family, his friends and legal advisers joined hands in a circle of prayer on the steps of Houston's Federal Court last night and, with the help of their family pastor, asked for divine intervention. But their plea came to late. A 12 strong jury had already decided Lay's fate and that of Jeff Skilling his right-hand man in the most celebrated criminal enterprise in Wall Street history" (*Times*, 26 May). The multi-million dollar fraudsters of Enron now await jail sentences for the 25 guilty verdict between them. Although Mr Lay's faith in prayer might impress the gullible it should be noted that Lay and Skilling also employed a team of lawyers costing \$20 million. So they weren't only relying on divine intervention.

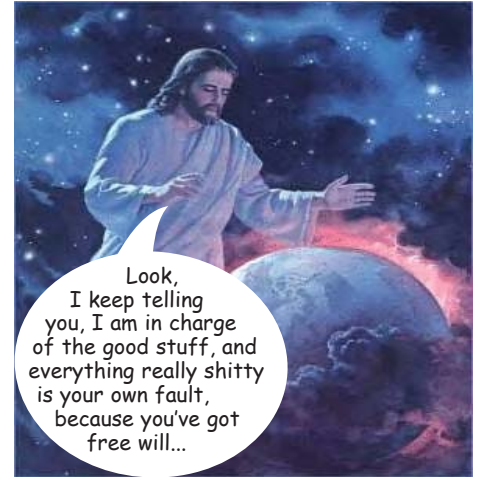
Outdated Marxism?

Away back in 1848 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto*. Ever since its publication it has been attacked by supporters of capitalism. Today the main criticism is that it is outdated and old-fashioned. Is the following passage outdated? "The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourer." (*Guardian*, 31 May) carried the following report, "Lecturers today threatened to take further strike action and toughen up "other sanctions", after they voted to formally reject the latest pay offer from universities." Far from being out-dated the *Manifesto* appears to be bang up to date.

Good Question

Pope Benedict XVI raised an interesting question when he recently visited the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz. "In a place like this, words

fail. In the end, there can only be a dread silence - a silence which is itself a heartfelt cry to God. Why Lord, did you remain silent? How could you tolerate all this?" (*Time*, 12 June). Like we say - it is a good question, but we doubt if the holy father has had any reply. God has remained singularly silent since biblical times.



Look, I keep telling you, I am in charge of the good stuff, and everything really shitty is your own fault, because you've got free will...

Suffering In Silence

A recent study by the charity Men's Health Forum, that questioned 1,212 men, found that 66 percent of them experienced depression or anxiety at some period in their lives. "Depressed men often suffer in silence, under pressure to keep up a macho front. ...The most common causes of anxiety and depression were work (44% of sufferers said it was a factor), financial worries (44%), fast paced living (27%) and relationship problems (25%)" (*Herald*, 12 June). It seems that capitalism is turning large sections of us into basket cases. Let's throw capitalism into the out-basket of history.



Capitalism would depress anyone

Free Lunch

by Rigg



■ in depth

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Globalisation - the new
language of poverty



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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 5 August** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial

More slaughter in the Middle East

Once again in the Middle East innocent workers are being killed and useful structures destroyed. The immediate cause was the capture in a raid from Lebanon of two Israeli soldiers but the ultimate issue was, once again, who controls this oil-rich region: the US and its allies or various local elites?

All states are artificial and illegitimate but Israel is particularly so. Set up by colonists from Europe on the basis of fables recounted in a book supposedly emanating from a god, it has been armed and financed by the United States as its only reliable ally in the region. Over the years it has acted as America's gendarme there to deal with sections of the local Arab ruling classes who have sought to challenge US domination. These sections, in their turn, have identified Israel for what it is and have sought to destroy it and have been able to win considerable popular support.

This is not to say that Israel is under direct US control. The rulers of Israel have their own agenda and can, and do, act independently of their protector. But that's a price the US has to pay to avoid sending its own troops to fight and die there. The US would like some compromise solution between Israel and local Arab elites but in the meantime gives Israel a virtual free hand, only issuing ritual appeals to it to exercise restraint.

Hezbollah, the Shiite militia in Lebanon, is armed and financed by two states whose regime the US has vowed to change: Iran and Syria. It is entirely possible that the present crisis was deliberately provoked by Iran, which has ambitions to be the dominant regional power, as a means of bringing counter-pressure on the US in the diplomatic trial of strength going on over its nuclear programme, a means of showing that it too is not without bargaining counters. Israel, incidentally, is without

doubt already a nuclear power, which shows up the US hypocrisy over the spread of nuclear weapons.

So, as a conflict over which states and ruling classes should dominate the region, no working class interest is involved except in so far as it is they who are its innocent victims and need the killing, maiming and destruction to stop. Socialists are always spontaneously on the side of the oppressed against the oppressors and the massive use of overwhelming force by the state of Israel clearly exposes it as the oppressor. But just because we sympathise with the victims of Israeli oppression does not mean that we favour the solutions popular amongst them.

A Palestinian state would be a capitalist state. "Anti-imperialism" is the slogan of local elites who wish to dominate the region in place of the US, a situation which would still leave the mass of the population there exploited and oppressed with the eternal problem of finding enough money to buy the things they need to live.

Capitalism is a war-prone society with a built-in clash of interests between states over markets, sources of raw materials, trade routes and strategic points to protect these. In the Middle East the conflict is over oil, and strategic points to protect its supply and transport, which has already led to many wars there.

The only lasting way out is to get rid of capitalism and replace it by a world society of common ownership and democratic control. On that basis, the resources of the world, including oil, could be extracted and used for the benefit of all the people of the world. Poverty and misery in the Middle East, as elsewhere, could be ended once and for all. The waste of arms and the horrors of war would disappear.

Socialism is, quite literally and without exaggeration, the hope of humanity.

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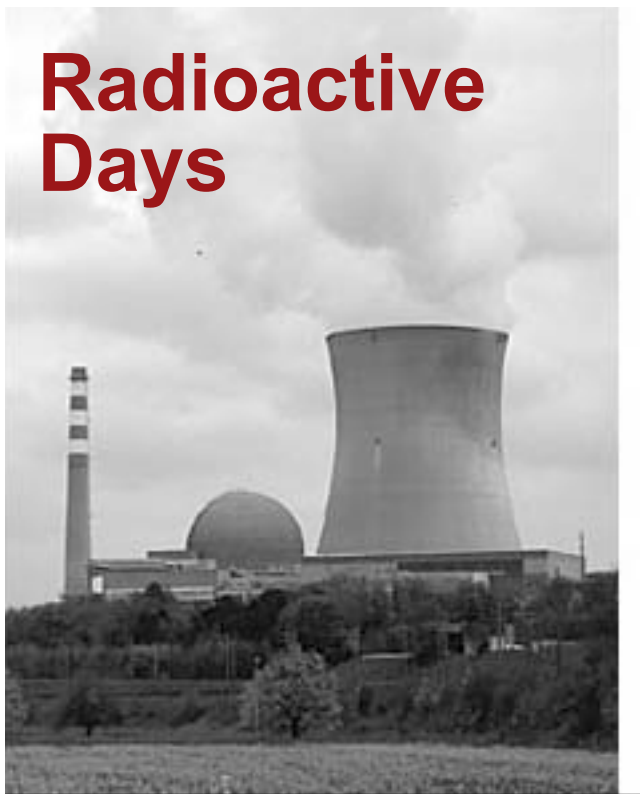
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Radioactive Days



Anyone who expressed shock, surprise, horror or helpless mirth at the government's decision to give the go-ahead to a new round of nuclear power stations in the UK deserves a slap and a strong injunction to wake up and smell the plutonium. This was always going to happen, so get used to it. Some people may have thought, in the wake of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, and the revelations of gross and grotesque safety infringements by nuclear companies in the 70's and 80's, that nuclear's goose was cooked, and that public opinion was irreversibly set against its comeback. Such optimists underestimate the power of creeping propaganda by the state and overestimate the collective memory of the public. What, besides a lot of bilge about new safety procedures and new ideas about waste disposal, has really swung it for the nuclear lobby is the increasing fear that we, in the West, are either going to be hostages to the mullahs in Iran or those commies in Venezuela for oil, or hostages to the Russian mafia for gas (who have shown themselves quite capable of turning off the taps if they don't get the price they want). Blair's government have played a clever game of buttering up the public with so-called energy reviews, which were really about acclimatizing public opinion to the inevitable. The greens have been effectively neutralized, being unable to find a way out of the environmental frying pan of fossil fuels without hitting the fire of nuclear fission, while emerging research into wind power has set back alarmingly the time necessary for this technology to start being a net carbon saver, from an estimate of 18 months by the wind turbine industry itself to between 8 and 16 years by independent researchers, on a projected 25 year turbine life span (New Scientist, July 8).

And could there be another and darker reason why nuclear is back on the agenda and the same money is not going to be spent either on renewables, or even more sensibly, insulating houses and finding ways to reduce consumption? The original reason for the nuclear programme was that not only could you run steam turbines with the resulting water vapour but you could also build bombs to vaporize your political and economic rivals, and the reasoning still holds good, in a world of ageing nuclear arsenals and an emergent superpower, China, whose expected ruthlessness in suppressing global competitors may be judged by its ruthlessness in suppressing its own people.

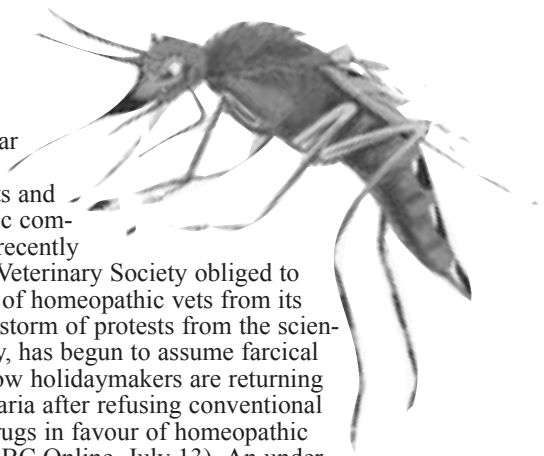
But the bitterest pill for environmentalists to swallow is that the government's case on nuclear is actually pretty hard to fault. Renewables provide about 4 per cent of the UK's energy supply and the most massive expansion programme imaginable is not going to increase that amount to a significant level for decades,

whereas the threat of strangulation from global suppliers of oil and gas is immediate and stark, as are the spiralling price rises. While the USA and the UK may with impunity invade Iraq when its chieftain starts monkeying around with oil supplies, the same tactic is hardly going to work in Venezuela, heavily backed by China, or in Russia, which nobody has ever invaded without immediately and solemnly wishing they hadn't. There are no other emergent technologies. Fusion is still decades away, and always will be, according to the old joke. Cold fusion is, according to the accepted wisdom, just a joke. As hydro goes bigger, the cracks in the dams start to appear, much to the embarrassment of Chinese engineers, and the energy of wind appears to be best harnessed by building on, and effectively destroying, millions of tons of peat bog, itself a massive carbon sink.

If socialism were established tomorrow, the question of nuclear energy would take a back-seat, behind more pressing questions of food production. But it would re-emerge, amid a hotly disputed debate over energy consumption and reduction. A socialist society which had to find energy out of nowhere and with no time to develop renewables, might conceivably go nuclear, at least for a time. But it is not a racing certainty, or even an ambling probability. If one were to take away the factors of capitalist competitive production which so completely influence the present controversy one would be left with a more rational basis for planning, which would take into account global minimum energy requirements, both domestic and industrial, rather than global optimum industrial performance to outdo business rivals. If Europe, for example, didn't have to stay one jump ahead of South East Asia and China in manufacturing stakes, and if China wasn't in such an all-fired rush to industrialise simply to compete on global markets, the question of energy might be approached in an altogether calmer and more globally sustainable way. But in capitalism, the energy question is really one of global dominance. The power at stake is really political and economic. Whether the source of that power is from nuclear fission, fossil fuels, or farting Friesians, is entirely beside the point.

The Sting

The ongoing war between mainstream scientists and the homeopathic community, which recently saw the Royal Veterinary Society obliged to withdraw a list of homeopathic vets from its website after a storm of protests from the scientific community, has begun to assume farcical proportions. Now holidaymakers are returning home with malaria after refusing conventional anti-malarial drugs in favour of homeopathic 'alternatives' (BBC Online, July 13). An undercover investigation by the group Sense About Science and BBC's Newsnight programme revealed that homeopathic consultants were telling people they didn't need the 'horrible' conventional drugs and could safely use homeopathic medications, which on analysis turned out to be 99.99 per cent water with a virtually undetectable level of quinine. When challenged by Newsnight, the clinics claimed this was a mistake, and that clients were told to consult their doctors, a claim not supported by the secretly recorded interview transcripts. However, all this doesn't seem quite fair on the hardworking homeopaths. Being in a sympathetic mood, Pathfinders offers the following explanation: what the clinics really meant to say was that their remedies were indeed perfectly effective, but only against homeopathic mosquitoes. The fact that mosquitoes are usually in the habit of delivering large and potentially deadly doses of malaria is a disappointing reflection on their unchristian natures but this can hardly be blamed on homeopathic clinics, who are only trying to help.



Galloway defended

Dear Editors

Pik Smeets' article (July *Socialist Standard*) is yet another criticism of George Galloway which to my mind, although there are perhaps some valid points made, is not really very helpful in the immediate struggle that we of the Left need to advance against the creeping neo-fascism excreting from Number 10 and Washington D.C.

Galloway, regardless of his personal motives, is a voice in Parliament roundly criticizing the murderous policies of this mutant 'ersatz' Labour Government and its Washington cohorts. Where are the other voices? Galloway is able to speak to the masses via the media. Maybe he's not a one hundred percent 'kosher' socialist but ordinary people are hearing him and know about him and are thinking about what he is saying. 'It's no damn good refining our socialist ideas, concepts and understandings amongst ourselves. Socialists need to be out in the community at large offering the light of reason to the people. Galloway, for all his faults, is doing that.

LEO ALIFERIS (by email)

Reply:

The message Galloway projects is hardly an advance for the working class. We refrained from retelling his ghastly support for Saddam Hussein: he went so far when he appeared on Big Brother as to claim that the Iraqis supported and were happy with that vile old-style fascist dictator; he even saluted Hussein to his face for his "strength [his] courage, [his] indefatigability". Far from being a voice for the oppressed in the mass media he is the voice of wealth and power in

the Middle East, and his role in the workers' movement is to poison it. Ordinary people hear this poison and think it has something to do with socialism. He and his ilk are just as great an enemy to the spread of socialist understanding as George > Bush, and the Socialist Party must oppose them - *Editors*.

Ban the ultra-right?

Dear Editors

I read your article titled "the case against censorship" (March *Socialist Standard*). I am also in favour of freedom of speech. It is true that Islamists and racists as individuals should be free to express their viewpoints and that atheists and socialists should also be free to criticise them by any unconditional means they find appropriate.

Islam's "prophet" knew how to read and write and wrote the Quran that reflects the tribal beliefs of barbarian Arabs who lived in pre-feudal socio-economic conditions but announced that was unable to read and write and that the "holy" book had been "posted" by god to his address in Saudi Arabia.

Racists deny equal rights for non "white" and non "English" citizens of this country and want to apply force and remove them from this bullshit country and also answer workers' and socialists' demands for the right of freedom of speech, press and organization by police force, jail, torture and murder exactly like terrorist Muslims. In other words, they both represent social forces that want to add more dictatorship to the present level of dictatorship of capitalists and their murderous suppressive British regime.

I think that those Islamic organizations

that support and organize terrorist activity and also "white founded" organizations that preach for "white power" or even "English power", should be banned from doing activity, since every year quite a few "whites" and a few more "non whites" are killed by these terrorist organizations.

When we can make workers accept that ultra right, whether it is Muslim terrorist or racist fascist, should not exist as an organization we would deprive the capitalist ruling class of the use of the ultra right to suppress the looming socialist revolution by using these ultra reactionary forces as its political and suppression machine representatives. SIAMAK HAGHIGHAT, London

Reply :

We are opposed to appealing to the capitalist state to ban any political ideas. It doesn't work anyway - *Editors*

Civil War in Uganda

Dear Editors,

There is a war which has been going on the Northern part of Uganda for now 20 years. This is a war between the Ugandan Government and the Lord's Resistance Army rebel armed forces led by one Joseph Kony.

It is clear that any solution resulting from violence or confrontation is not lasting. It is only through peaceful means that we can develop better understanding between ourselves. Though lies and falsehood may deceive people temporarily and the use of force may control human beings physically, it is only through proper understanding, fairness and mutual respect that human beings can be genuinely convinced and satisfied.

There is one world and we exist as one

continued on page 17

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Globalisation - what does it mean?

*We begin a two-part article on the continuing surge in capitalist globalisation.
This month we deal with the globalisation of capital*

Following the downfall of state capitalism in Eastern Europe the idea of one global market soon found common cause in neo-conservative and neo-liberal circles. Indeed, for these ideologists of capitalism the world market only became truly global once the former state capitalist regimes threw open their doors to private finance and capital investment from the G7 nations. Obviously, for such thinking to take hold it had to ignore a multitude of historical facts concerning the economic development of capitalism and its eventual transformation into a world system.

In 1865, for example the first global regulatory agency was formed with the creation of the International Telegraph Union, along with the first global medical resource, which we know as the Red Cross. Also, if globalisation only took place when the G7 nations became G8 (with Russia joining) then the new 'thinkers' need to explain how two wars commonly referred to as world wars were fought over who was to dominate access to global raw materials and a market that was already global. Another historical fact that is largely ignored is that despite supposed ideological differences the trade between the state capitalist regimes and the rest of the world increased throughout the Cold War.

This is how the economist Keynes confirmed - rather belatedly - in the aftermath of World War One, the process of globalisation that had gone on until then:

"What an extraordinary episode in the economic progress of man that age

which came to end in August 1914! . . . The inhabitant of London could order by telephone, sipping his morning tea in bed, the various products of the whole earth, in such quantity as he might see fit, and reasonably expect their early delivery upon his doorstep; he could at the same moment and by the same means adventure his wealth in the natural sources and new enterprises of any quarter of the world, and share, without exertion or even trouble, in their prospective fruits and advan-

"The Cold War itself proved to be a nice little earner"

tages; or he could decide to couple the security of his fortunes with the good faith of the townspeople of any substantial municipality in any continent that fancy or information might recommend."

Coming from Keynes it would be rather naive to expect him to describe the wave of globalisation that had taken place around the turn of the twentieth century in terms other than pro-capitalist ones. For unlike Marx, who saw the main instrument for social change originating with the class conscious workers, Keynes was convinced throughout his life that the capitalist class held the centre stage, albeit with the need of some interventionist help from the state. Marx had also predicted the potential for

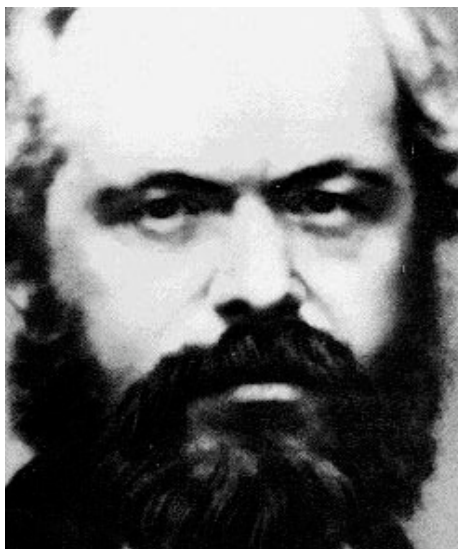
capitalism to become a global system, with its attendant economic, political and social consequences, when he and Engels drew up the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. And he confirmed, far earlier than anyone else, the trend for capitalism to evolve towards economic interdependency and globalisation when *Das Capital* was published in 1867.

Spoils of war

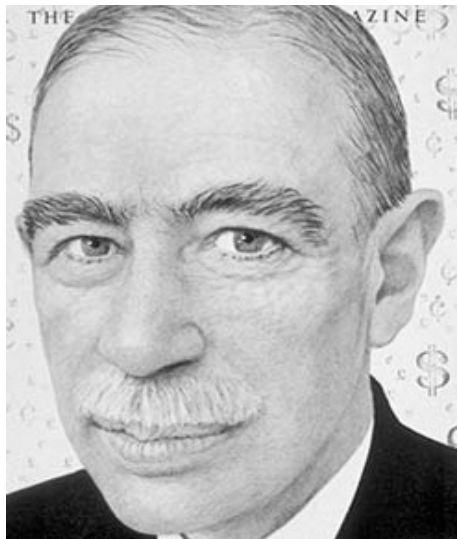
The arguments over the benefits of 'protectionism' versus free trade that existed during the nineteenth century, and then in the periods just before and then after the First World War, were never entirely resolved within the capitalist class one way or another. Fierce arguments raged with various policy initiatives and reversals, though for most of the dominant states of the time (such as Britain) what passed for 'free trade' gained something of an ascendancy by stealth.

But in terms of the globalisation of the system, the most crucial event took place rather later, towards the end of another war caused by competition over economic power and military interests - World War Two. Significantly, in the summer of 1944 at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire the gangster representatives of 44 countries held a meeting to hammer out a deal on global trade and sharing the spoils of (the latest) war. This included the creation of the World Bank and the IMF and the initial setting up of a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), with the latter coming into force in 1948.

Although these new institutions



Above: Marx predicted the potential for capitalism to become a global system, whilst Keynes, below, convinced the capitalist class held the centre stage with help from the state. Botom: The meeting of 44 countries at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire



eased the existing rules on tariffs and the movement of currency, by seeking common ground on exports and imports and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), they had no powers to control new forms of protectionism that had been instigated by the major powers in order to maintain their market share and economic dominance. And this was reflected in what happened shortly after the Second World War ended, when the US introduced the Marshall Plan in 1949 involving \$13.5 billion of loans by the US government to near-bankrupt European economies. All told \$90 billion was steered towards 16 countries that agreed to move towards currency convertibility, lowered trade tariffs, who promoted exports to the US and who were 'tough on communism'. This not only meant that the US export market was protected in Western Europe but was also, in retrospect the first economic warning shots in the start of the Cold War.

Cold War Economics

The Cold War itself proved to be a nice little earner for those countries in the "developing" world who allied themselves to either East or West, with most of the proceeds ending up in arms deals or directly into the pockets of corrupt politicians and bureaucrats. Not that this bothered the developed countries, for during this period of Cold War economics many developing and undeveloped countries found themselves accepting loan agreements whether they wanted them or not - and with very favourable terms of borrowing at very low rates of interest, plus long-term payback dates. They seemed at the time to have little to lose by becoming debtor nations. As for the creditor nations, both East and West, their aim during the cold war was to increase their hegemony and market share by making the client debtor nations militarily and financially dependent on them as creditor states and to gain the upper hand over their competitors.

The loans themselves came from a variety of sources: manufacturing and financial businesses, banks, donor states, the IMF and the World Bank being the main lenders. Much of this money was lent under a 'no risk' guarantee covered by Export Credit Agreements (ECA), where individual donor states with their export agencies would underwrite the loans through aid contracts - specifying that the capital investment could only be spent

through named companies established in the donor state.

For instance, the Nigerian government could have decided to build a university, and could approach a donor state like the UK to finance the project, both seeking agreement as to the profitability of the aid. The UK government would then stipulate that the university could to be built by a UK developer and equipped by British manufacturers and key posts staffed with British-trained personnel. Should the Nigerian government default on their repayments of the loan what would usually happen is that the UK would agree to pay off the loan under ECA if the Nigerian government issued a bond tied to a percentage of Nigerian oil exports in order to cover the amount owed. This would ensure the capital invested stayed in circulation via petrodollars, despite the losses incurred. Obviously, deals like this could only continue whilst there was sufficient confidence in the strength of the US-driven Western economies.

Crisis of Over-Accumulation

During the early 1970s this changed dramatically when loss of confidence over escalating costs of the Vietnam War became evident with many countries selling off their dollar reserves in favour of gold. Unable to withstand this pressure the US came off the Gold Standard in 1971 and allowed the fixed exchange rate system that was pegged to the dollar to collapse. The price of gold increased and there followed a period of financial instability which, in essence, reflected the return of economic crisis in the sphere of production, with economic downturns in major western economies and growing unemployment. It was at this time that the main oil-producing cartel dominated by capitalists in the Middle East (OPEC) decided to quadruple their oil prices. These events eventually flooded the North American and European financial markets with vast amounts of accumulated petrodollars searching for profitable investment that was difficult to find in the more 'traditional markets' of the post-war period. Due to the European Economic Community (EEC) at the time being insufficiently organised or integrated to attract the massive amounts of capital in the OPEC countries, some of it filtered towards the Pacific Rim, commonly referred to as the 'Asian Tigers'.

PROTECTIONISM

An economic policy designed to actively restrict imports into a country, through means such as 'quotas' (which only allow for the import of certain maximum numbers of goods in a given period), or 'tariffs' (which place a tax on imports to make them less attractive to importers). Advocates of protectionism, such as British Tory politician Joseph Chamberlain a century ago, have typically argued that it is a means for protecting domestic industry and agriculture from foreign competition. Historically, it has been most actively and aggressively taken up by state capitalist countries of the political far right (e.g. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in the 1930s) and of the far left (Soviet Union, China, etc) when attempting to challenge other, more dominant, states.

FREE TRADE

This is a situation whereby the free flow of goods and services is not interfered with by state intervention and measures such as protectionism. In practice it is an idealist conception within capitalism that is never attained completely because of the active role of the state in modern capitalist nations, but advocates of free trade argue that the nearer economies get to this situation, the greater world growth and prosperity will be as there will be fewer restrictions on production and trade. For obvious reasons, it is a policy favoured more by powerful, dominant economies with a competitive advantage - but even then, some selected elements of protectionism may remain where needed (e.g. the US economy today).



India and China are being reshaped in the interests of capitalism

With the exception of the Multifibre Agreement drawn up by GATT, much of this investment for Asia hit a variety of protectionist barriers on the export of capital. Although GATT tried to get around monetary restrictions with the introduction of the SWIFT system for electronic inter-bank fund transfers worldwide and other measures, the pressure for change in currency regulations intensified throughout the 1980s as capitalism's trade cycle returned with a vengeance with plummeting production and soaring unemployment.

Out of this emerged what came to be called the 'Washington Consensus' instigated by the neo-liberals within the US Treasury, IMF and World Bank who advocated a programme to free up capital assets by: privatising state owned monopolies; reducing personal and business taxation; deregulating financial institutions; removing restrictions on FDI; and reducing public spending, particularly on welfare benefits. Urged on by the collapse of the state capitalist regimes who could not compete economically or militarily any longer with the dominant Western economies, the pressure continued to intensify for deregulation of currency movement and the abandonment of GATT, and its replacement by the World Trade Organisation. This eventually took place in 1995 and under it trade and the movement of currency and capital assets has had a much more straightforward path to profitable markets.

Deregulation of currency movement and the removal of restrictions on FDI, however, proved to be just too late for the developing countries on the Pacific Rim. By 1997 these countries had found their credit was severely overextended, delivering a lower rate of profit than predicted by the pundits and speculators of the financial institutions. The unintended consequence of the crisis in South East Asia was the acceleration of the movement of currency into other areas still - like China and India - where there were better prospects of profits.

This is the nature of capitalism for the accumulation of capital is dependent on economic growth, regardless of the risk attached, and is essential to the workings of a system that puts competition and the pursuit of profit, at each link in the chain - from production to distribution and eventual sale to the consumer - above all else.

Risks

With the velocity facilitated by the internet, clearly the overall economic trend is

towards short-term profits through FDI, currency speculation and by squeezing market share of competitors, particularly in manufacturing and services. But that does not mean that the developed countries are solely concentrating their investments in the developing countries - far from it. The greater volume of trade and investment is still between the G8 countries themselves who, forced by global market conditions, have taken into account the relative economic, political and social stability of the developed world, compared to what they would sometimes gain from

“China is using 47 percent of the world's cement to complete the damming of the Yangzi”

relatively precarious investment in any of the developing, or even undeveloped countries.

Generally, what is most noticeable about this economic activity is that all the developing countries targeted by the World Bank, IMF and the WTO were selected because they have access to sufficient energy and water supplies to sustain a short-term industrialisation programme, rather than sustained long-term growth. For example, China is scouring the world for all the uranium ore available and every drop of oil necessary to accomplish its aim of overtaking Japan and becoming the main industrial nation in South East Asia and second to the US globally. And China is currently finding it very difficult to meet the increased demand for electricity and for bottled and industrial water, and consequently using 47 percent of the world's cement to complete the damming of the Yangzi, to meet their targets on urbanisation and industrial capacity. In effect the Chinese have soon come to realise that without sufficient energy and water their plans for long-term growth are unachievable. Although this economic targeting over energy and water resources is undoubtedly a high-risk strategy, and has all the potential for military conflicts over essential resources, it is one explanation why the emphasis is on short-term profit and speculation.

What is also apparent is that the freeing up of the movement on capital has not entirely been accompanied by a corresponding deregulation in the movement of labour. Indeed, the restrictions on immigration have been tightened in some cases, and strictly enforced by some countries to hold back the flood of economic, and mostly illegal, immigrants chasing the movement of capital in the developed and developing countries. These phenomenon have led to the growth in human trafficking - and the casualties are being found suffocated in the back of lorries at Dover harbour, or drowned on a beach in Morecambe Bay or even crushed by a train in the Eurotunnel.

There are also other risks associated with the pursuit of industrial growth in the developing world, the most obvious one being the spread of AIDS, particularly in Africa where it has been helped along by a tenfold increase in the transportation of commodities. And then there's the risk that the increase in global pollution and the onset of global warming will put severe pressure on the relocation of coastal communities. A less immediately obvious risk is of an increase in capitalist industrial growth in some countries facilitating and encouraging the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction and their eventual use in competitive power struggles between states. These and other risk factors can only accelerate as the demands for more energy and water increase in line with industrial growth.

The reasons why these patterns of risky economic activity are so pronounced are many and varied, but all are nonetheless based on capitalism's inherent competitive drive to maximise profits regardless of the consequences. The actual growth in economic development in parts of the developing world attracting investment has been on a tremendous scale with developing countries like Brazil, China and India sucking in vast amounts of capital to increase their infrastructure and manufacturing base. In particular the annual percentage increase in GDP for China (9.8) and India (8.1) illustrates how these economies are being dramatically reshaped in the interests of capitalism. ■

BRIAN JOHNSON

Next month: the impact that the continuing surge in globalisation is having on people in the developing and undeveloped countries.

Foreign takeovers: a non-issue



From a recent Amicus handout urging the boycotting of Peugeot

A recent poll shows public opinion in Britain is becoming increasingly perturbed by the changing ownership of the companies that make up the British economy, but does it matter to workers who own the company that exploits them?

The poll, conducted by Harris Interactive at the beginning of June, found that the acquisition of British companies by those based in other countries is causing major concern, with "more than two thirds of people saying it is now 'too easy' for overseas predators to acquire businesses here," (Financial Times, 19 June 2006) and urging government intervention.

The poll comes after 18 months of intense acquisition and take-over activity on the London Stock Exchange that reaped a cash bonanza for the shareholders of a number of well-known companies and shows no sign of abating. The feverish activity has been fuelled, in large part, by foreign-based companies buying UK companies in deals that in the first 10 months of 2005 were worth £70 billion - twice the value of such deals for the whole of 2004. In one week alone in November 2005, four potential deals involving P&O, Pilkington, O2 and Mowlem were reputedly worth £24 billion.

More recent events have aggravated the unease. The announcement that Peugeot was to close its Ryton car factory, destroying 2,300 jobs, was accompanied by persistent rumours that Gazprom, the Russian oil and gas company, is about to take over Centrica in a period of rising gas and electricity prices. The timing of the Harris poll also coincided with the finalisation of the Spanish company Ferrovial's bid for the British Airports Authority, which owns Heathrow, Gatwick and Stanstead airports, among others.

The reason behind all this is not difficult to discover. As noted in the Observer on 6 November last year, "The reason for the activity is simple: five years of belt tightening following the technology boom has left UK plc in robust health. Returns on equity are higher than they have been for years and cash generation has been strong, leaving balance sheets healthy." Since profits in these companies have remained 'healthy' it is evident that it is the working class who have experienced the 'belt tight-

ening' - foregoing improvements in living standards, motivated, one suspects, by the fear of losing their jobs. Growth in company profits in the last few years is not the outcome of a general increase in sales but a consequence of cost savings. All too often these savings are secured by holding down wages, intensifying working conditions and, where necessary, terminating jobs - the destruction of the livelihood of men and women with all the misery and dislocation this entails.

"Globalisation is the newest name for a process that has been ongoing since capitalism was first established"

Behind the concern expressed in the survey is the misguided belief among working people that they have a stake in making sure that companies retain their British ownership. Many appear to hold the view that foreign companies cannot be trusted to maintain existing employment levels and have the unsubstantiated conviction that workers will enjoy greater job security when the ownership of their workplace resides with people born in the same country. It is taken for granted that those who own the factories, raw materials and land, and those who sell their labour power for wages and salaries within the same country, automatically share a 'common interest,' when the opposite is actually the case.

Capitalism has divided the world into two irreconcilable but interdependent groups - the working class and the capitalist class. Despite the fact that the interests of these two classes are antagonistic, the relationship is also strangely symbiotic. The working class own no means of producing

wealth and are dependent, through wages and salaries, on those who do, while the owners of the means of production are dependent on a subordinate working class to sustain their position of power and privilege. The working class exchange labour power for money which allows them to gain limited access to the necessities of life. In this exchange the worker produces value greater than that of their own labour power. This value belongs to the capitalist.

Calls for the 'right' to work, sometimes heard in times of economic depression, are therefore no more than a demand for the 'right' to be exploited by anyone willing to offer employment. Arguments about 'fair wages' are simply abstractions that acknowledge the power of the capitalist class to dictate the condition of life over the subordinate working class. Society as presently organised cannot be operated in any other way and workers who never look beyond this truism fail to comprehend that an alternative society that does not work against their interests can be established - but that society is not capitalism.

Production in capitalist society is geared strictly to the generation of profit - extracted from the working class when goods are produced and released when they are sold on the market to those who have the money to buy. Individual companies are dependent on generating and attracting capital to reinvest in order to continue operating. Capital always chases profit, moving from less successful companies to those where profit expectation is higher, without regard to the effect on employment or human welfare. Capital does not discriminate between the relative merits of the products and makes no distinction between the production of bombs and the production of bandages as long as the risk is as low and the activity as profitable as possible.

Wage labour and capital are in constant conflict. The capitalist class is continuously seeking to reduce the workers' share of the social product to expand the accumu-

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Who Are the Looters?

A year after hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans we look at what was a media obsession at the time.



Far left: Jabar Gibson driving evacuees by bus to Houston. Left: Mayor Ray Nagin, who told police to stop rescuing people and crack down on looters.

What is the first priority of government in the wake of disaster? Saving lives? Looking after the survivors? Disposing of the dead and preventing epidemics?

Think again. At best these things come second. The first priority of government in the wake of disaster is exactly the same as its first priority at other times: maintaining or restoring "order" - that is, its powers of coercion. Moreover, the first purpose of "order" is to protect and enforce property rights. From this point of view, the main threat posed by disasters like Hurricane Katrina is not the threat to human life and health, to the environment, or even to the economy. It is the threat of "chaos," the threat to "order" and "civilization," but above all to property, arising from the temporary breakdown of government.

The "looter" symbolizes and dramatizes this threat, conjuring up images of Viking warriors on the rampage, barbaric violence, evil incarnate. Of course, these particular "Vikings" were all the more terrifying for being black. In the days that followed the hurricane, the media stirred up racist fears of the poor black people of New Orleans, spreading rumours (the fashionable expression is "urban myths") later shown to be exaggerated out of all proportion, if not completely unfounded. For example, in the week following Katrina the number of murders was average for the city (four) (see Ivor van Heerden and Mike Bryan, *The Storm*, pp. 124-8).

All in all, we shouldn't be too shocked or too surprised to learn that at 7 p.m. on Wednesday August 31, 2005 martial law was declared in the flooded city. Mayor Ray Nagin told police officers to *stop rescuing people* and focus solely on the job of cracking down on looters. This was just two and a half days after the hurricane made landfall and with thousands of

people still stranded in attics and on rooftops.

In one typically heroic encounter, police officers chased down a woman with a cart of supplies for her baby, handcuffed her - and then didn't know what to do with her. All the jails were flooded. By the end of the week that problem was solved. A new makeshift jail was set up at the Greyhound bus terminal, with accommodation for 750 prisoners. This was the *first* institution in the city to resume normal functioning.

True, it could have been worse. After the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 people were shot dead as looters while foraging in the wreckage of their own homes (see G. Hansen and E. Condon, *Denial of Disaster*, 1989).

Why did people loot? Or to use less loaded language, why did they take things that didn't belong to them without paying for them?

One man answered a TV interviewer who had asked him why he was looting by asking in turn: "Can you see anyone to pay?" The stores had been abandoned by

"the looters of New Orleans are keeping up an old American tradition and should receive credit as good patriots"

their operators, but people still needed the things stored there. They needed food and fresh water, dressings for their wounds, new clothes to replace those ruined by exposure to the "toxic gumbo" of the

floodwaters. Most of the so-called looting was of this kind - for the satisfaction of desperate need. In any sane society that would be a good enough reason for taking things.

Two paramedics from San Francisco who found themselves trapped in New Orleans wrote about the Walgreens store on the corner of Royal and Iberville Streets in the French quarter. The owners had locked up and fled. Milk, yogurt, and cheese could be seen through the window in the dairy display case, spoiling in the heat.

Should we expect the parents of hungry and thirsty children not to break in, even at the risk of being pursued by the police? Would they have been good parents had they failed to do all in their power to see to their children's needs? And what of storeowners who choose to let food go to waste rather than give it to needy neighbours? My first impulse is to wax lyrical about the sheer meanness of their behaviour. But probably they made no such *conscious* choice. As businesspeople they must have thought of the food and drink in their store not as *products* for assuaging hunger and thirst, but merely as *commodities* for profitable sale. If they could no longer be sold they might just as well go to waste.

There were looters who acted not just for themselves and their families but for the benefit of the local community. For instance, the young men who collected medical supplies from a Rite Aid for distribution among elderly neighbours. Or the man who distributed food from a Winn-Dixie store to the 200 or so people holed up at the Grand Palace Hotel. "He was trying to help suffering people, and the idea that he was looting never crossed his mind."

Socially responsible people of this kind are sometimes described as "comman-



Armour patrols the streets

deering" or "requisitioning" the goods they seize. That may well be how they view their own actions. In legal terms, however, only government officials, as representatives of duly constituted authority, have the right to commandeer or requisition property in an emergency. Private citizens who do so, whatever their motives, are engaging in theft and may be penalized accordingly.

Consider the feat of Jabar Gibson. This resourceful young man, purely on his own initiative, found a bus that was still in working order (the city authorities assumed that all buses had been ruined by the floodwater), took charge of it, filled it up with evacuees, and drove them to Houston. This was the *first* busload of evacuees to reach Houston after the storm (at 10 p.m. on Wednesday August 31). The police were forewarned that a "renegade bus" was on its way; if they had intercepted it Jabar might have been arrested and charged with theft. Fortunately he was in luck: he got through to his destination, to be greeted by Harris County Judge Robert Eckels. Presumably his crime has been forgiven.

Of course, not all looters were responding to real personal, family, or community needs. Some were simply taking a rare opportunity to acquire coveted though nonessential consumer goods. For others looting (and shitting in) fancy stores

was a form of social protest or "empowerment," an outlet for pent-up anger against the endlessly advertised world of affluence from which they felt excluded.

Finally, there was a phenomenon that I propose calling "entrepreneurial looting." Entrepreneurial looters gathered assets with a view to later sale. As they got stuff for free, they could sell at any price and still make a profit. For example, "urban foresters" went after valuable lumber." Other entrepreneurs sold looted liquor. The cases of large-scale organized looting by armed groups (their weapons also probably looted) that received so much publicity must, I think, have been of this character.

Brinkley reports an interesting conversation between Lieutenant Colonel Bernard McLaughlin of the Louisiana National Guard and a man selling liquor at a makeshift bar. When McLaughlin tells the bartender he is shutting him down, the man replies that he is "just being entrepreneurial." Why shouldn't he make some money? McLaughlin gets angry at this appeal to "true American" values. "This is looting. You looted that... That's a 15-year felony. That's a 3-year mandatory minimum sentence." The man submits and McLaughlin proceeds to smash his bottles one by one. And yet the preceding account makes clear that McLaughlin's real objection to such bars has nothing to do with the provenance of the alcohol. He doesn't want

"Looting is as American as cherry pie"

the locals drinking alcohol because it makes them more quarrelsome and disorderly as well as further dehydrating their bodies. Would he have allowed the bar to stay open if it was selling - or giving away - only looted fruit juice, soda, and bottled water? Legally, however, looting remains "a 15-year felony," be its social consequences good or bad. Property is sacred.

The bartender might also have tried to point out in his defence that historically all capitalist enterprise is based on looting. Early capitalism looted land and other resources from peasants (in Europe) and from indigenous peoples (throughout the Americas and other colonial territories). The looting even extended to the kidnapping and enslavement of millions of human beings, such as the ancestors of most victims of Hurricane Katrina. Marx called it the primitive accumulation of capital. Looting is as American as cherry pie; the looters of New Orleans are keeping up an old American tradition and should surely receive all due credit as good patriots. But... it depends on *whose possessions you loot*, doesn't it? ■

STEFAN

(Sources: Douglas Brinkley, *The Great Deluge* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006); Understanding Katrina website (understandingkatrina.ssrc.org), Kaufman.)



Cooking the Books (1)

Was there an alternative?

Mrs Thatcher always maintained there was no alternative to the policy her government was pursuing in the 1980s of putting promotion of profits before meeting people's needs. When challenged about cutting benefits and social services, she replied: There Is No Alternative. When confronted with protests about closing factories and coalmines, her reply was the same: TINA.

Socialists were inclined to agree. We knew that capitalism - the profit system - runs on profits and that all governments, taking on as they do the management of capitalism, sooner or later have to apply its priority of profits before people. The Thatcher government was merely doing this sooner rather than later and with undisguised glee. Not that capitalism can never offer reforms but, since the post-war boom came to an end in the early 70s, previous reforms had become too expensive and had to be cut back to ease the burden of taxation on profit-seeking business.

Proof that there is no alternative under

capitalism to putting profits first has been provided by the Blair government which took over in 1997. They have continued the same policy, even if they have been more mealy-mouthed about it, calling it "modernisation" and even "reform".

Now, in a bid to out-Blair Blair, the new Tory leader wants to kill off Tina. The *Times* (22 May) reported that "David Cameron will tell business leaders today that there is 'more to life than money' as he attempts to make a clean break with Thatcherism".

The pre-released text of his speech explained:

"Wealth is about so much more than pounds or euros or dollars can ever measure. It's time we admitted that there's more to life than money, and it's time we focused not just on GDP, but on GWB - general wellbeing. Wellbeing can't be measured by money or traded in markets. It can't be required by law or delivered by government. It's about the beauty of our surroundings, the quality of our culture, and above all the strength of our relationships."

Most people probably feel like this, but capitalism as an economic system cannot take into account "general wellbeing" precisely because this can't be quantified in money terms. Capitalism is all about making and accumulating monetary profits and,

in pursuit of this, not only ignores but actually degrades "the beauty of our surroundings, the quality of our culture, and the strength of our relationships".

Cameron, naturally, disagrees. The next Tory government, he said, will embrace "capitalism with commitment" (*Times*, 23 May), presumably to make it promote people's general wellbeing.

The trouble is that Cameron himself is a product of the degradation of "the quality of our culture". He's just an image designed and packaged by the same people who try to (mis)sell us washing powder, deodorants and private pensions, only with the aim changed to attracting votes rather than sales. To expect such a product to change capitalism's priorities is just absurd.

The next Tory government will be no different from the present Labour one. It will continue to promote the general commercialisation of life and the reduction of human values to monetary ones. People will continue to be reduced towards becoming isolated atoms competing against each other on the market place, with the consequent weakening of "our relationships".

That's the tendency under capitalism, which no government can reverse. There is no alternative. Or rather, there is, but not within the profit system.



July saw commemorations for the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Spanish Civil war which lasted until 1939. Usually little heard of outside historian and left circles it remains a conflict shrouded in myth, heroism and controversy.

For most of the early 20th Century Spain had been in turmoil, the monarchy fell, in 1931 - and liberals and conservatives were still struggling over the future shape of society. Trade unions - heavily influenced by anarchism (especially in Catalonia and Barcelona) were more like paramilitary forces, fighting a pistolismo war with employers and the state who were brutally trying to suppress them into brutal poverty. The worker's movement was split, however, and there was a large Socialist Party (PSE, chiefly a Labour party of the traditional type) with its trade union federation the UGT, with the anarchists in the syndicalist CNT.

Some (these days, those with long memories) use the example of Spain as an incident in which the capitalists would turn to arms and civil war to stop a rising socialist movement, but this ignores several fea-

tures of the events that lead up to the civil war.

Although often portrayed as a war to defend democracy from insurgent fascists, it is fair to say that political democracy did not command strong support from all sides of the political spectrum. Indeed, in 1934, Largo Caballero, the "Spanish Lenin", led an abortive revolt with a general strike that was crushed in Madrid, and the miners in Asturias managed to take control of their whole region before being put down - a genuine uprising. This attempt at violent revolution terrified the professional and ruling class of Spain, and set the stage for later tensions. By February 1936 Caballero and the leadership of the Spanish Socialist Party were out of prison and instead part of the newly elected popular front government which won by the slimmest of majorities.

This front consisted of liberals, Basque and Catalan separatists, the PSE and the Communist Party. Although the working class parties were the larger, the liberals actually headed the government - something which was not conducive to stable rule. The PSE itself was not united, ranging from Fabian-like reformists through to die-hard revolutionaries. So it is clear that there was not a solid considered demand for revolutionary change. The Asturias rising had frightened the horses, and the right began to plot their own uprising.

In the background to all of this, political assassinations and murders continued apace - with partisans of the right and the left at each others' throats. Churches were burned down, political offices wrecked, chaos was spreading throughout society. The sort of everyday politically motivated chaos we have seen so many times since - currently in Iraq, for example.

At the head of the rightwing were the Falangists, a genuinely radical fascist grouping determined to smash the socialists. They were joined by conservative Catholics (representing a large landowning interest), monarchists and the military. It would be the military, under General Francisco Franco, who would provide the main vehicle for the National Front's resistance.

On 18 July 1936 Franco issued a *pronunciamento*, the traditional announcement that preceded Spain's many previous military coups. Unlike them, however, this was a call for a massive social struggle, and one that both sides had been waiting for. Carnage began immediately - radio officers shot their ship's captain rather than hand them over the order. The barracks in Barcelona were surrounded and eventually vanquished after bloody struggle - a national general strike was called.

There followed a savage war - with estimates of the number who died varying from three hun-





International Brigade outside Madrid 1936

dred thousand to a million. It was a thoroughly modern war of the people in arms - aided with zeal, heroism and determination against the organised efficiency of a professional army. Although the advantage nominally lay with the loyalist Popular Front government forces (they had the money) they were deeply divided and Franco took the bulk of the army - especially the experienced troops.

The "international community" reacted by imposing an arms embargo on both sides - the same sort of trick the Major government used to back the Serbs in their war in the former Yugoslavia. Despite this embargo, some of the great European powers saw this as a chance to flex their muscles. Mussolini's fascist government sent troops and armaments. The German Nazis sent the Condor Legion - and Spain quickly became a training yard for the new form of aerial warfare practised by the Luftwaffe. On the loyalist side aid was given by the Soviet Union through the auspices of its International Brigades - recruited by Communist Parties in various countries. Others, such as George Orwell, volunteered independently.

The international brigades to this day hold a place of honour for many in Britain, especially among the Labour Party, some of whose members revere them as defenders of democracy and anti-fascists leading the way in a war that could have stopped fascism before the great slaughter of world war two. Many died, bravely; and their defence of Madrid reads like something

from an epic poem. Their enthusiasm made them have a great impact on the war, but not enough to actually save political democracy in Spain.

What started as a local struggle quickly developed into an imperialist battleground, a proxy battle for the tussle between Germany and Russia. This aspect quickly overrode the local concerns - the communists were able to punch above their weight of support thanks to their gift of arms, and they quickly joined with government forces in suppressing the elements of social revolution and independence thrown up by anarchist groups throughout the country. Communist Party torture chambers were discovered after some of their strongholds fell.

This is the source of much of the political recriminations springing from that war. Trotskyists accuse the anarchists of failing to organise a vanguard party and seize power (which was, apparently offered them, much as Baldwin offered the reigns of government to a shocked TUC in 1926). Anarchists point to the role of the Stalinists in liquidating their advances, and point, with some justice, to their achievements. The Trotskyists accuse the Stalinists of selling out Spain in order to demonstrate to the capitalist powers that the USSR had no designs on spreading a world revolution.

In some areas revolutionary committees controlled all the major infrastructure and industry - money was replaced by varying types of voucher system (although in some places they simply instituted controlled prices and wages). Democracy ran throughout the anarchist columns, with democratically elected officers accountable to their troops. The ad hoc nature of these



American troops, International Brigade

pled with the fragmentation of Spain, the ongoing warfare and the continued existence of the market throughout the supply chain eventually meant that they were doomed to failure.

Eventually Franco triumphed, and went on to rule Spain until his death in 1975 - to that rare reward for dictators, death in office. His period of authoritarian rule, built on the back of smashing an independent workers' movement and suppressing the regionalist tendencies of the Basques and Catalans meant that a reasonably orderly transition to capitalist business as usual was possible.

The Spanish civil war has an immense ability for people to read their own interests and perspectives into it. It was a melange of heroism, imagination and derring-do mixed with calculated cruelty, brutality, murder mayhem and brute stupidity. It is difficult to blame anarchists who took up arms to defend themselves and their unions from murderous bosses; but we can perhaps look to the rejection of political democracy that preceded the civil war and gave the armed authoritarians the support they needed to break cover and launch their assault.

It is vitally important today to remember that socialists must be the standard bearers of civilisation - the defenders of the political democracy and the peace that we will need to successfully manage the transition to production for use. Rubble doesn't make a good basis for building socialism. ■

PIK SMEET



Commodity markets

"1p and 2p pieces are now worth more on the commodities market than in the high street", reported the *Times* on 12 May. Pre-1992 copper coins are 97 percent copper and, as the price of copper had reached a record high of \$8,312 a tonne, they had, theoretically, come to be worth more than their face value.

"Commodity prices yesterday", the report went on, "continued their bull run as traders bet that demand from fast-growing economies such as China would continue. Platinum, nickel, zinc and copper prices hit a new high".

Socialists, too, talk about "commodities". We say that capitalism is "the highest form of commodity production"; that workers' ability to work is today a mere "commodity", bought and sold on a market; that people's needs, and life generally, have become "commodified".

The meaning that the financial pages of the papers attach to the word is much more restricted. For them, it refers only to primary products, not just metals such as platinum, nickel, zinc and copper but also to oil and to agricultural produce such as coffee, sugar and wheat. These are indeed commodities in the Marxian sense in that they are items of wealth produced with a view to being bought and sold, but they are not the only things that are commodities.

In the Marxian sense, anything produced with a view to being sold is a commodity. Capitalism is the "highest form of commodity production" in that under it most items of wealth are produced as commodities. In addition, the human capacity to work, our mental and physical energies, take the form, as some-

thing bought and sold, of a commodity. In fact, this is what distinguishes capitalism from "simple commodity production", where this is not the case. Under capitalism anything, even if not originally produced to be sold, can, and increasingly does, take the form of a commodity, from honour, sex and influence to body parts and past works of art. There is a market for all these things. The tendency of capitalism is for everything to become "commodified".

But to return to the commodities of the financial pages, the *Times* report was unusually frank in admitting that gambling is involved in "commodity markets". The primary products on sale on these markets have two types of price: a "spot" price, which is the price on the day, and a "futures" price, which is a price at which someone agrees to buy or sell the product at some set future date.

The economics textbooks say this is to allow the users of the product to plan ahead. This is true but you don't have to be someone who actually wants copper or oil or wheat or whatever to intervene on a commodity market. When you buy something there is no physical transfer of the product but merely a change of ownership.

Gamblers can offer to buy a product in the future at a given price even though they don't want it, in effect betting that the spot price at that time will be higher. In which case they sell - transfer ownership - and walk away laughing with a bigger bank balance, while the product goes to someone who will use it to produce something.

It's nice to know that while millions are suffering from malnutrition there are others gambling on the future price of wheat. What a way to organise the production and distribution of the things humans need to live and enjoy life.

The Battle of the Somme

The recent 90th anniversary of the human tragedy of the Somme saw the politicians, the churches and the organisations charged with remembrance giving history a makeover.



The Allied warlords planned a massive assault set for mid-summer 1916. The offensive was to be carried through by the combined Allied armies and was intended to break through the German lines on the Western, Eastern and Italian fronts imposing a defeat of such magnitude on Germany as to bring a speedy end to the First World War.

Doubtless it all worked out well for the generals and marshals as they threw clay representatives of thousands of human beings into homicidal battle against one another on the sands table; But battles are not won on sands tables and in the early spring of 1916 the Germans spoiled the plot by opening up a massive assault against the French city of Verdun which absorbed French divisions planned into the attack on the Western Front at the Somme.

In the week before the 1st of July Allied artillery carried out a ceaseless bombardment of German positions on a five-mile stretch of the front. In all they fired 1.6 million shells but many of the British shells failed to explode and the German fortifications not only proved largely resistant to the shelling but also provided subterranean tunnelling where soldiers could take refuge from the bombardment.

Such was the confidence of the British Command that an enervated German line would crumble before the ferocity of a massed attack that they ordered their 11 divisions to *walk* steadily across No-Man's-Land towards the German fortifications. At 7.30 hours on July 1st the men arose out of their entrenchments in response to the blowing of whistles and proceeded to walk towards their objectives.

Immediately they were confronted with a deadly fusillade from German machine-guns. Like lemmings they offered their bodies like blades of grass before a scythe; wave after wave of them, the cared prodigy of wives and mothers learning the falsehood of patriotism or paying the price for volunteering away from poverty or the

dull, hum-drum meanness of wage slavery. 60,000 of them fell that day, 20,000 dead, the rest flawed statistics.

The chaplains were busy intoning their prayers to a remorseless god and the generals, too, were brutal and remorseless for it didn't stop; it continued the next day and for four more months. In October the torrential rains came changing the blood-soaked ground into a quagmire where putrefying

“There were no generals killed or wounded and the Allied forces had advanced 5 miles ”

human flesh mingled with the mud and obstructed men as they were striven to further slaughter. When this single phase of the hellish conflict was exhausted in mid-November those designated as 'British' were 420,000 fewer while the French lost 195,000 men and the Germans over 600,000. There were no generals killed or wounded and the Allied forces had advanced 5 miles over wasted, barren land.

The Somme, Passendale, Salonika, Suvla Bay, names of strange places that became prominent in the lexicon of war and its brutalities. 'Men led by donkeys' was the popular alibi for the monstrous slaughter and the ineptitude of warlords like the British Somme commander, Earl Haig became the focus of bitter criticism and sick jokes. There was no poetry now in the killing; the avalanche of stereotyped telegrams expressing official regret at the death of a husband or son began to speak louder than the xenophobic vapourings of politicians and the media and officialdom

may well have been haunted by the thought that workers turned soldiers might catch on to the duality of their exploitation and the brutally obvious fact that a social system that required periodic bloodletting was fatally flawed.

Time has accounted for those who survived the battle; those who ploughed through the detritus of decaying human flesh and wept for dead comrades.

If you were a tourist from Mars attending the Somme commemoration the vital question you might want to ask is why were millions of men, men of no property and no financial interests, men who had never met those they were now told were their enemies and with whom they did not share a language that would allow them to curse at one another, *why were they killing? Why were they dying?*

The answer is that they were fighting over markets and the political and economic appurtenances of trade; that war was, and is, simply a logical extension of a brutally competitive system of social organisation predicted on profit and ongoing expansion; a system that dominated their lives, took away their human dignity and reduced them to the status of wage slaves and cannon fodder.

So the question must be avoided at all costs; capitalism's obsequious apologists, its politicians, its beholden clergy and media hacks will change the script: Tell the fools how brave they were and how proud they should be; that'll keep them happy to the next time.

"Give a benediction, bless them with a prayer,

And tell them how the son of God was longing to be there!"

In the circumstances of the conflict bravery is a empty virtue; an abuse of language that must surely add insult to injury. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE



Thirty-five billion

I've been toying with the figure \$35 billion which I heard the other day - toying with it because I, like most folk I've spoken to about it since, couldn't grasp the sheer enormity of it. What did it actually represent? So I decided to do my own in-home research using the New Internationalist World Guide latest edition's figures (UN statistics).

This is what I came up with:
\$35,000,000,000 is the equivalent of (GNI is gross national income):

- 1) 1 year's GNI of \$35,000 for 1,000,000 people in USA
- 2) 1 year's GNI of \$1,000 for 35,000,000 people in the Philippines
- 3) 1 year's GNI of \$480 for 70,000,000 people in India
- 4a) 1 year's GNI of \$240 for 140,000,000 people in Mali or
- 4b) 10 year's GNI for total population of 14 million in Mali
- 5a) 1 year's GNI of \$100 for 350,000,000 people in Ethiopia or
- 5b) 5 year's GNI for total population of 74 million in Ethiopia.

Now, if just one person owned all that wealth they'd have to put it somewhere safe, in some kind of bank or shares or whatever where it would be safe and accumulate, e.g. a 1 percent return over 1 year would produce \$350,000,000 in interest; a 5 percent return \$1,750,000,000; 10 percent \$3,500,000,000 and so on - assume compound interest kicking in and you'll have to do your own figures or find an expert; however, you get the picture.

Of course when you've managed to accrue enough after a few years to be able to give away the lion's share without noticing any difference at all in your own life style people will applaud you and say what a wonderful, altruistic person you are.

What would *you* choose to do with your fortune? Beat malaria? Wipe out the debt of several Highly Impoverished Nations? Bring clean water to some of the millions without? Fund schools or hospitals in perpetuity from your foundation's coffers? The possibilities are endless.

But, surely, one person wouldn't actually have so much money! How would one person acquire enough in the first place to be able to put money to work to accrue more money? Simple, just use other people, lots and lots of people, to do the work for less than it's worth to produce the goods on your behalf and pocket the difference.

The less you manage to pay your workers and the more you're able to sell your goods for to other workers, the better the profit you'll make, enabling you to be the one to choose how to improve life on the planet

for the unfortunate masses.

How can it be, however intelligent, hardworking, honest and/or altruistic, that ONE person's 'gift' can be equal to the income of all the people of Ethiopia, men, women and children, for 5 years?

How can it be that *one* person should be able to choose how to affect (or not to affect) such a multitude of people, albeit in a positive way?

How can it be that so many people have so little choice in their *own* lives?

It's the *system*, my friends, the *system* that puts profit above all else - how else could it work?

The system that uses and abuses people all around the world, the system that can't work with full employment, universal healthcare and satisfied bellies, but must rely on chasing profit around the globe whatever the consequences for the planet and its inhabitants.

Imagine 1,000,000 US citizens giving up their whole year's income.

Imagine the entire population of Mali having no income at all for 10 years.

Imagine one man having that much spare cash. I don't doubt that you know which particular man I'm writing about - the second richest man in the world, Warren Buffet, who's decided to donate not \$35b but \$37b to the charitable foundation of the richest man (Bill Gates).

But what's \$2,000,000,000? Well, 3 years GNI for the Maldives . . .

Am I knocking Bill Gates, Warren Buffet et al? No, I'm knocking the system which allows, nay encourages, a small minority to exploit the vast majority in an unequal relationship. The capitalist system cannot work with equal relationships. There have to be (a few) winners and (many) losers.

Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, the right to clean water, enough food, access to health care, a comfortable home, to raise one's children in a cooperative rather than a competitive society in a well-husbanded world environment in the knowledge that there is a sufficiency of all our basic needs and no good reason for *anyone* to go without. This is the only fair system.

If you're content with the status quo then carry on as before. However, if you've taken the time to read this far the chances are you're not content. If you're sick and tired of hearing the same old political fixes on offer and are looking for real answers then take a few more minutes to look at the *only* alternative. It could be the best thing you'll do this year. ■

JANET SURMAN



Calling Home

One aspect of globalisation is outsourcing or offshoring: moving jobs from a country where they've traditionally been performed to another, usually on the grounds of lower wages and therefore higher profits. This has already happened with many manufacturing jobs: work is now carried out in China and India rather than in Britain or elsewhere in Western Europe.

But factories aren't the only workplaces to be outsourced, for it also applies to one of the 'boom' occupations of recent years, namely workers in the call centres which are often now the only way to contact your bank, insurers or credit card company. A huge office-cum-warehouse where employees essentially just answer the phone all day doesn't need to be in the same country as the caller or the company's head office. After all, if you live in Dover it probably doesn't matter if your call is answered by someone in Delhi rather than Darlington - indeed you may well not know where the person at the other end of the phone line is. Hence many call centres operate in India, which has a ready and keen supply of educated English-speakers. Workers there are given special classes in British TV, especially soap operas, so they can engage in chit-chat with callers, who often want to do a bit more than just talk about their bank account. Savings for the employers could be as much as 50 percent over a similar operation in Britain.

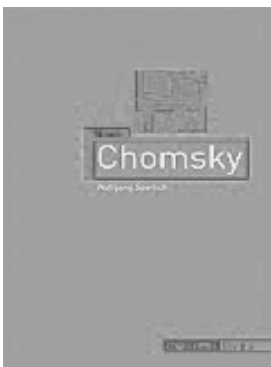
But now it seems that all is not so rosy in the garden of the outsourced call centre (*Guardian*, 30 June). For one thing, workers in India have turned out to be not so docile or grateful for the work after all, as absenteeism and staff turnover approach levels found in the UK. This is what happens with so many of the jobs resulting from globalisation: they're boring, there's no career structure, and workers are subject to a lot of petty controls such as the time taken for breaks. And for another, there have been complaints about poor service, and some companies make a point of advertising the fact that their own call centres are still in Britain. There's no doubt some prejudice operating here, against non-native speakers of English, but if companies lose customers because of their perceptions about call centres then they will sit up and take notice.

The sting in the tail of the *Guardian* article is the information that an Indian outsourcing company is intending to set up a large new call centre in Belfast, attracted by the cheap property prices there. Capitalism truly is a global system, and those who own the means of production will go to any lengths to boost their profits. ■

PB

Chomsky

Wolfgang Sperlich: *Noam Chomsky. Reaktion* £10.95.



This is a volume in the Critical Lives series, so it opens with a brief biographical sketch of Chomsky, noting that he was influenced by writers such as Anton Pannekoek and Paul Mattick. It's good to learn that by his early teens Chomsky was not just opposed to Stalinism but was also "a pretty committed anti-Leninist". Then comes a chapter on his contributions to linguistics and philosophy, though to be honest you'd need to have some prior idea of his views here to make much sense of Sperlich's presentation.

The main chapter is entitled 'Political Activist', and it presents Chomsky's writings on various political issues, concentrating on his exposures of US foreign policy. This is a decent guide to Chomsky's attacks on the US government, military and establishment, from Vietnam to Nicaragua, the Middle East to the aftermath of 9/11. Unfortunately there's little attempt at elaborating Chomsky's own views on how society should be organised, other than labelling him variously as an anarcho-syndicalist and a libertarian socialist. He's quoted at on point as saying, "capitalist relations of production, wage labor, competitiveness, the ideology of 'possessive individualism' - all must be regarded as fundamentally antihuman." Also that a consistent anarchist must oppose wage slavery and private ownership of the means of production.

Chomsky has often expressed his support for 'left wing' governments in the developing world. With regard to the president of Brazil, Sperlich writes, "I ask Chomsky if Lula da Silva shouldn't have abolished the state of Brazil by now and introduced council communism or anarcho-syndicalist freedom. Chomsky answers that it's easy for us to say such things because we do not have to live with the consequences - Lula da Silva has to." Perhaps Chomsky should have said that it was a bloody stupid question, based on the assumption that a political leader can introduce a new social system.

The last chapter summarises Chomsky's work on the mass media as a tool for suppressing the truth and presenting a pro-capitalist view of the world, for (in the title of one of Chomsky's books) 'Manufacturing Consent'.

So this is a useful if unexciting guide to Chomsky's ideas. And until I read Sperlich I didn't know there is a radio station called Radio Chomsky, even if it is in New Zealand (see <http://www.radiochomsky.com/>).

BB

"Marxists"

Phil Rees: *Dining with Terrorists*. Pan, £7.99.

When I listen to BBC correspondents talking about 'Marxists', which they frequently find in remote jungles and other desolate places on the planet, I am tempted to think of Cyril.

Cyril and I were young together; he was academically bright, knowledgeable and had even what is now called 'streetcred', virtues which earned him considerable grudging respect among us, his peers. His virtues became past tense, however, one summer's evening when four of us, coincidentally apprentices in Irish 'terrorism', were sitting around an open fire where we were camping outside the coastal village of Cushendall in County Antrim. Probably the subject led to it, I don't remember exactly, but Cyril announced with profound authority that he not only believed in fairies but that he had actually seen and heard fairies! It cost him his credibility; all his intellectual capability was eclipsed by that single absurdity.

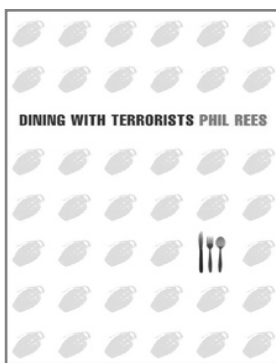
The author of *Dining with Terrorists*, Phil Rees, was, and maybe still is, a BBC journalist who has worked on *Correspondent* and *Newsnight* and who has spent gruelling spells in many of the world's trouble spots. He has dined with people who have killed their political enemies or who have - rather like Bush and Blair - set in train such killings and who for so doing or allegedly doing have become known to us through the media as 'terrorists'.

From his experiences he gives us graphic word pictures of fearsome characters and to his credit he tries to tell their story within the context of what we have been told about them by the western media. Indeed that is the *raison d'être* of Rees's work. It is his effort to define in 'moral' terms the meaning of the word 'terrorist' in light of the awesome legal violence used by and in the control of the modern state, and the brutal reaction that violence frequently spawns. It is a theme often pursued in the *Socialist Standard* and one expressed in the aphorism 'One man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist'.

Given such honesty of purpose it is regrettable that the author demeans his work by the undefined abuse of the term 'Marxist': throughout the entire book he uses the word as though it was an essential pre-fix to the words 'terrorist' and 'terrorism' that so confuses him.

In the fashion of the BBC and its journalists, he makes no attempt whatsoever to outline what he perceives to be Marxist or Marxism. Doubtless if he knew, he would realise just how ridiculous it is to suggest that, for example, FARC nationalists in Columbia are killing in order to establish a wageless, moneyless society of common ownership and production for use.

Away from the often-repeated non-



sense about Marx and terrorism the book is both interesting and informative but the informed reader will find Rees's belief in fairies more than a little distracting.

RM

Pensions myth

Phil Mullan: *The Imaginary Time Bomb. Why An Ageing Population is not a Social Problem*. IB Taurus.

There are too many old people. They are becoming an unsupportable burden on the pensions and health systems. If nothing is done about it there will be a generation war between pensioners and the decreasing proportion of those of working age.

So runs the argument consistently put over by the media. But, according to Mullan, it's a myth based on faulty statistics, disguising a hidden agenda by people who want to cut pension and welfare benefits for other reasons and/or want to make money by selling private pensions.

He points out that while the proportion of over-64s in the population is indeed rising this is mainly a reflection of a reduced birth rate in the past, which has meant a fall in those now in the 16-64 age range. This has happened before in the last century without the dire consequences now being predicted. Most estimates, he says, don't take into account the reduced expenditure on the under 16s that a fallen birth rate means nor the fact that a significant proportion of the 16-64s are also not working, not just the disabled and the recorded unemployed but also many who are on "incapacity" benefit as early retirees whom capitalism denies a job. Nor does it take into account the fact that over time the productivity of those at work rises nor that the health of the over-64s is improving.

So, for Mullan, the "pensions time bomb" is an imaginary threat, but not just a panic cynically stirred up by vested interests. It is also a reflection of what he calls the current "age of anxiety" where:

"The feeling of uncertainty and insecurity influences discussion and debate in all sphere's of life. Politicians have lost popular authority and have tended to limit their objectives. The main idea coming out of political think tanks on both sides of the Atlantic seems to be that there are no more 'big ideas'. Most Western governments have adopted a narrower agenda of managing what exists rather than seeking to intervene in society in pursuance of more ambitious aims. . . Interacting with the élite's loss of nerve, the erosion of previous collectivities is a major source for this popular mood. The demise during the 1980s of trade unions and of less formal mechanisms of support, solidarity and community have left people more on their own than ever to face the problems of everyday life. The social fragmentation and individuation that has made life seem more secure".

This pessimism, bred (we would add) by the inability of capitalism to meet needs and by the failure of reformism last century, is the fertile ground on which the vested interests concerned have been able to sow this particular panic.

ALB

"Red Elvis"

Dean Reed: Death of a Comrade. Radio 2, 11 July. Presented by Mark Lamarr.

For a time in the 1970s, Dean Reed was probably the best-known American in South America and Eastern Europe. Though, as he sang, "Nobody knows me back in my home town." Born in Denver in 1938, Reed was a rock singer who never quite made the big time in the US. Understandably enough, he felt that nobody who worked in Hollywood could keep their integrity.

When one of his records became a hit in Chile, he travelled there to perform and was struck by the obvious inequalities in power and wealth. He later settled in Argentina, but after some unwelcome attention from the dictatorship he moved to Europe. His left-wing views attracted the attention of cultural bosses in Russia, and he was invited there. He became a great success with young people in eastern Europe, who were keenly interested in Western popular music.

In 1973 Reed decided to move to East Germany permanently. The secret police or Stasi were initially suspicious of him and spied on him, but they later tried unsuccessfully to recruit him as an agent. By the 1980s, however, he was no longer a star in Eastern Europe, as younger musicians from the West were touring there. He considered returning to the US, but remarks on radio and TV chat shows (e.g. comparing Reagan to Stalin and defending the Berlin Wall) led to him receiving hate mail. In June 1986 he was found dead in a lake near his home in East Berlin - officially an accident but probably suicide.

Mark Lamarr's programme contained interviews with people who knew Reed and excerpts from his (unexceptional) music. It also made the point that he failed to see how ordinary East Germans felt about the regime that governed them and how they viewed him as an establishment figure. So the rebel became another apologist for the Bolshevik dictatorship, one who certainly would have had no place in a unified Germany.

PB

letters continued

people in need of each other and with the same basic needs. There is far more that unites us than can ever divide us along cultural, nationalistic or religious lines. Together we can create a civilization worth living in, but before that happens we need the conscious cooperation of ordinary people across the world, united in one common cause-to create a world in which each person has free access to the benefits of civilization, a world without frontiers or borders, social classes or leaders and a world in which production is at last freed from the shackles of artificial constraints of profit and used for the good of humanity.

War is not about our interests, but those of the bosses who rob us so that they can be rich and powerful. War is about the competition between capitalists. If we are to die it will be for them. Think about that as the masters of war ask for your support in the prevailing wars.

Why should we die defending what is not ours and which we will never benefit from?

On the contrary our object is to obtain what is not now the possession of our class-the earth and its natural and industrial resources. The class war between the parasites who possess and the workers who produce-is the real struggle that need concern us. And to win that war we need not initiate the violence which is characteristic of capitalism's wars. The war we should advocate is that which has to be waged on the battle of ideas-for the hearts and minds of the world's people. And once we unite there will be no force that will stop us taking the earth into our common possession.

There is nothing natural about war. Are we born with a desire to kill people who speak a different language or who have a different skin colour? No! In fact peaceful cooperation is more fitting for human beings who are potentially rational human beings. Once we live in a world of common ownership and democratic control of resources, there will simply be no reason to kill one another. No empires to build or markets to expand or profits to increase.

WEIJAGYE JUSTUS, Kabale, Uganda

Foreign takeovers... continued

lation of capital and has become an uncontrollable independent power without regard for human need, seeking out opportunities to grow anywhere and everywhere across the world. Globalisation is merely the newest name for a process that has been ongoing since capitalism was first established.

Capitalism is an intensely predatory economic system. In the competitive struggle for survival many companies may be driven from business by competitors, while others, attracted by rising profits or a desire to suppress competition will be taken over or merged with rivals. Employment is dependent upon generating profit, which means that the real function of the world's working class is not to make products or provide services but to generate and then increase these profits. Working people in every country are trapped in an economic system where they must sell - and thereby relinquish control over - their physical or mental energies simply to earn money to buy the things that enable them to resume the same routine, week on week to the end of their working lives. This vicious circle will continue until capital is abolished and capitalism brought to an end.

The conclusion reached in the Harris poll is indicative of worker confusion - a misguided belief that it is somehow less painful to be exploited by the portion of the owning class based within these boundaries than by that based elsewhere. The cause of poverty and insecurity is not the threat of 'foreign' companies but the economic system that sustains the international class monopoly over wealth creation and draws strength by exploiting working people in every country. As long as capitalism is allowed to continue it makes little actual difference to the working class who owns their place of employment - they will remain expendable wage or salary earners.

For as long as workers are deceived into viewing the world from a 'national' perspective, they will fail to understand their condition in capitalism. The working class is deluded by nationalism. Such beliefs actively encourage people to co-operate with their 'national' exploiters operating within boundaries determined purely by historical accident. Nationalism conceals the real nature of capitalism, turns worker against worker and serves to impede working-class solidarity. The world's working class have no reason to be antagonistic to other workers but must unite against their common class enemy: the world's capitalist class. ■

STEVE TROTT

Canned Laughter

Some people, including some socialists, used to get quite irritated about the way that recorded laughter was inserted into, first radio, then television, shows that went under the generic heading of comedy. But we have slowly got used to this feature of modern life in capitalist society. It is almost universal now. It is applied to quality comedy and poor comedy; those with real audiences and those with no possibility of an audience at all in the location of the action. Like antidepressant drugs, canned laughter is prescribed for nearly everybody. Because, let's face it, much of the time, if you didn't laugh, you'd cry.

Many aspects of living in this increasingly dysfunctional world society are moving in the same direction. In Japan, as well as North America and Europe shopping has become the diversionary avenue of seeking feel-good factors. Clothes, to make us feel good about

our appearance; various types of car, to make us comfortable about our status among our neighbours; health foods, to make us feel healthy; exotic foods to make us feel opulent; gyms, to make us feel confident or even superior about our physical fitness and sexual attractiveness. Houses, gardens, kitchens, etc., etc. Our electronic gadgetry, from mobile phones and digital cameras to MP3 recorders and players, offer us more power to do things we hadn't even thought of and probably will never try.

The planet is being pillaged, plundered and polluted to make commodities for us to buy, partly because we need them and capital must have the flow of profit, but increasingly in the effort to obliterate our basic hunger for freedom, the one thing we cannot have. Like canned laughter, the temporary lift we get from commodity gratification is artificial, false. It hides a bad joke. ■

R.C.

WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
- Can't make it to a meeting?
- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

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Drugs and the Death Penalty



While the controversy about the abolition of hanging has been causing such a furore in this country, a significant change in the American law recently has passed by almost without comment. This is the passing by Congress of the Bill aimed at the drug traffic in the United States, which includes in its provisions increased penalties for trafficking in drugs and, in particular, the death penalty for those found guilty of selling heroin to young people under 18. The background of the Bill, the drug traffic, was recently reported on by a US correspondent of the Economist (14th July, 1956). The picture is horrifying.

According to the Economist's correspondent the United States is said to have more drug addicts than all the other Western nations combined, and the authorities are engaged in a constant battle against the traffic. The main impetus to it is given by the needs of 60,000 addicts who are prepared to spend anything from \$10 to \$100 a day to satisfy their craving. To get this money, many of them resort to crime, and it has been said that about half of the crimes committed in large cities and about a quarter of crimes in the US are the result of this drive to get drugs.

The police seem to be able to do little more than hold their own. Smuggling is fairly easy, and rife. The product is small and expensive, and profits are huge - nine ounces of uncut heroin can earn \$50,000 when diluted for retail sale. New pedlars soon step in to take the places of those arrested and put in gaol.

Apart from the sale of such vicious drugs as heroin, there is a large business done in other less dangerous drugs, much of it barely legal. In the words of the Economist :-

"But the narcotics problem extends beyond the underworld; it reaches on to the counters of unscrupulous chemists. Housewives eager to lose weight take amphetamines and do not realise that they have become addicts until it is too late. Officials are also worried about the widespread use of barbiturates (sleeping pills). In theory these are obtainable only with a physician's prescription; in fact many chemists will sell them and users do not realise that addiction leads to grave dangers to mental health".

Altogether a terrible story. And made even more dreadful by the extension of the death penalty to try to deal with it.

(Article by S. H., *Socialist Standard*, August 1956).

Central London

Saturday 12 August, 1.30pm to 5.00pm

1.30 Welcome. Tea. Coffee. Biscuits.
2.00 Debate: **"WHERE DOES THE REAL POWER LIE IN CAPITALISM?"**

Speakers: Bill Martin and Gwyn Thomas.

Room 7. Friends Meeting House (side entrance), 173 Euston Road, London NW1 (opposite Euston mainline station). Nearest tubes: Euston, Euston Square

East Anglia

Saturday 23 September, 12 noon to 4pm

12 noon: Informal chat.

1pm: Meal.

2pm to 4pm: Discussion.

The Conservatory, back room of Rosary Tavern, Rosary Rd, Norwich.

South London

Saturday 26th August, 2.30pm

PEACE IN PALESTINE?

Speaker: Gwynn Thomas.

52, Clapham High Street, London SW4 (nearest tube: Clapham North)



Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the

consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class

will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the

working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Be kind to a hoodie

"The political parties concluded that there were more votes to be won through a repressive, rather than permissive, policy about crime and punishment"

Although David Cameron, in his speech on youth offending, did not actually advise us to get out and hug as many hoodies as we could find, he should have suspected that his speech about the need to "...understand what's gone wrong in these children's lives" would be quickly summarised by the media in those sensationalist terms. Perhaps he thought he was being original (he wasn't) or courageous (gambling would be more accurate) or progressive (in fact it's all be thought of and said before). By the time of his speech hoods and hoodies had become, in New Labour speak and other such trendy verbiage, an issue. For example last May the Bluewater shopping centre in Kent banned anyone wearing a hood, along with those who swore or behaved in similarly challenging ways. But there were apparent problems in this as there has yet to be a satisfactory definition of a hoodie - does the term include the enthusiasts who gather on railway platforms to make a note of train numbers? When does an anorak become a hood, with all that implies in terms of a threat to mug old ladies who have just collected their pension from the post office? If a hood is made of the finest cashmere wool and sold in a trendy Notting Hill boutique is it still an aid to an offender trying to hide their identity? And what would the genuine hoodie think about having a fleshy Old Etonian approach him in the street, when he was out looking for an opportunity to do a bit of swift robbery, and start to hug him? Wouldn't that be enough to put anyone off a life of crime forever?

Hoodies for Sale

Bluewater said they were delighted at the effect of their measure, which they claimed was responsible for a marked increase in their customers - although how many of these were reporters and assorted media hacks is not known. Hood manufacturers made no comment; the company *Bon prix* continued to advertise its wares with pictures of pretty girls and muscular, handsome young men and slogans like "Ladies, your favourite hoodies at great prices..." Tony Blair was delighted - with his eye on the readership of the *Daily Mail* he recruited Bluewater's experience as justification for his government's introduction of Anti Social Behaviour Orders. Amid the panic a few voices were raised in question - like Harold Williamson, a policy researcher at Cardiff University, who thought "We need more politicians who are courageous, who stand up and say 'Look, this is a complex issue and we need to think about it seriously'". And there was David Cameron, adopting the role of the courageous politician who had something to gain by taking a markedly different, possibly unpopular, line:

"The hoodie is a response to a problem, not a problem in itself... But hoodies are more defensive than offensive. They're a way to stay invisible in the street. In a dangerous environment the best thing to do is keep your head down, blend in, don't stand out."

And then, crucially:

"...it's about family breakdown. It's about drugs, it's about alcohol abuse, often it's young people who are brought up in care when they should be in loving homes."

Children Acts

This did not go down well with Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells (and, as we shall see, of Bromley and Chislehurst), who would have preferred the traditionally tougher attitude Cameron had expressed only weeks before, when he assured the Centre for Policy Studies that "We support tougher sentences" and "...improving the effectiveness of the courts, and the CPS, and making sure that our prisons really work". Furious Tory bloggers

declared that they would never vote for the party while he was leader. Labour spin doctors, grateful for this opportunity to label the Tories as soft on crime, trotted out slogans about Hoodie hugging. Nobody seemed to notice that Cameron was a bit out of



Go on, give him a hug- you know you want to

date, in that he was advocating something which once almost had the status of accepted wisdom and was an article of faith among Labour Party members. The Children and Young Persons Act of 1969 was something of a zenith in the post war reformist legislation about crime. It was intended to deal with youngsters who had committed offences through local authority "care" rather than the courts. Decisions about whether a young offender stayed at home or went into residential care would be taken by Social Workers instead of magistrates (which did not please many a magistrate). The Act was driven by a mass of enquiry such as the Longford Committee which was set up in 1964 by the Labour government and which concluded that many of the offences by youngsters could be accounted for by their social conditions and that, therefore, the remedy lay in an examination of those conditions. In 1968 the Home Office stated that

"It has become increasingly clear that social control of harmful behaviour by the young, and social measures to help and protect the young, are not distinct and separate processes. The aims of protecting society from juvenile delinquency, and of helping children in trouble to grow up into mature and law-abiding persons, are complementary and not contradictory."

Futility

That was a long time ago, before the political parties concluded that there were more votes to be won through a repressive, rather than permissive, policy about crime and punishment. Michael Howard was among the more adept at this, rousing Tory conferences with flaming speeches on the theme that prison worked, advising criminals that "if you can't do the time then don't do the crime". Then there was John Major whingeing that what was needed was to "condemn a little more and understand a little less". And now there is Tony Blair and "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime" which, as time passes and the criminal statistics do not support Blair's optimism, has come to mean simply being tough on crime. It will be interesting to see how long Cameron is able to persist with the policy of "understanding" and "loving"; he could not have been encouraged by the result of the by-election in Bromley and Chislehurst which, the first test of his popularity since he won the Tory leadership, saw the 13,342 majority of the staunchly right wing Eric Forth slashed to just 633.

Cameron is being accused now by his own membership of changing the Tory party so that it is almost indistinguishable from the Labour Party. Indeed, in the matter of the hoodies he has said more than Blair at his most ambitious would have dared to. Perhaps, like Blair and his drive to erect New Labour, Cameron calculates that his best chance of winning power is to make the two parties so similar that it is not just impossible but also pointless to search for enough difference between them to be worth a vote either way. But reality is clear. The politics of capitalism is the process of choosing between two or more parties which to all intents and purposes are identical. To make that choice is crass futility, while capitalism's problems, like violent crime, remain impervious to all efforts to legislate them out of existence. Instead, why not go out and hug a hoodie? ■

IVAN



Voice from the Back



The Price Of Oil

Away back in September 2003 two workers were suffocated to death in a huge gas leak on Shell's Brent Bravo oil platform in the North Sea. "Bill Campbell, a former senior manager with the oil giants, says vital maintenance work was ignored and lies told to allow platforms to carry on producing oil at all times" (Daily Record, 14 June). The company were fined £900,000 for safety breaches, an amount that is completely derisory when compared with their billions in profits every year. Bill Campbell, who worked in the North Sea for 25 years, went on BBC Scotland TV to denounce the company, but they did not send a spokesperson to deny the charges. They were probably too busy counting their profits to consider the deaths of two expendable workers.

Lazy Workers?

"Avoiding work is a full-time job and seems to be getting harder, at least in America where Workaholics Anonymous now has self-help branches in 35 cities. New figures suggest that employees are working three hours a week more than their parents did, the equivalent to nearly four extra weeks a year" (Times, 21 June). Socialists used to be told that socialism was impractical because the working class were too lazy. That argument certainly doesn't apply here.

A Tale Of Three Virgins

Three sisters in Inverness featured in a bizarre insurance policy. They insured themselves against having a virgin birth. The insurance company only cancelled the policy because of religious pressure. "The Catholic Church was not happy about what we have been doing" (The Herald, 23 June). What was their objection we wonder? They don't believe in virgin births? They could not accept the

notion that the next Jesus might be a Jock? A second coming could lead to mass unemployment in the Vatican?



Science And Profits

Sir Ian Chalmers writing in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine states that the scientific record of clinical trials is being distorted by drug companies in order to protect sales. "Patients' lives are being put at risk because drug companies cannot be trusted to publish unbiased clinical research, according to a leading scientist" (Times, 29 June). We are dealing with capitalism, we are dealing with a multi-billion dollar industry, why shouldn't we have distortion? After all that is how capitalism operates.

Not Newsworthy?

Every evening editors of The Sun, The Daily Mirror and The Daily Mail have to make a decision about what to splash on their front pages the next day. Shall it be Pop Star Sniffs Cocaine, Soap Star Visits Brothel or maybe Politician's Gay Secret? The senior policy officer for Water Aid, Henry Northover is hardly likely to make the tabloid's headlines with the following. "Imagine 20 Jumbo jets filled with children - that's the number who die every day

owing to lack of clean water and sanitation" (Observer, 2 July). We are trying to imagine 20 Jumbo jets full of children crashing every day, and frankly it makes us ill, but of course it is not newsworthy in this mad society.

For The Good Times

The end of the World Cup has left many social observers scratching their heads in disbelief. No violence, no hooliganism and no mindless madness? Can this be the working class that the Daily Mail are always warning us about? Tens of thousands of working men and women from all over the world, enjoying each others' company, laughing, joking, dancing and who knows what else. It would almost make you believe that world socialism is possible, unless you read the Daily Mail of course.

And The Bad Times

Because of the proliferation of TV channels advertisers are concerned about their "lack of penetration" into profit-making areas. Even worse is the advent of VCR recorders, where people watch shows and delete the ads. The answers for these hucksters is to sponsor sports events. Unlike soaps, that workers can look at later, sports events are watched while they occur. This explains why the TV rights for NFL (American football) is \$3.7 billion, the World Cup \$1.1 billion and why you had to watch those silly Budwieser ads. Worse is to follow. "Images like a giant Coca-Cola bottle emerging from the centre circle, can be projected onto the pitch" (Observer, 9 July). Perhaps they could arrange a penalty shoot out between Pepsi and Coca Cola? Capitalism distorts everything, even our leisure time..



Free Lunch

by Rigg



ISSN 0037 8259



■ in depth

■ in touch

■ insight

socialist standard

September 2006 Vol. 102 No. 1225 £1

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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 2 September** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

TEL: 020 7622 3811

E-MAIL: spgb@worldsocialism.org

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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums; make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial War, Plots and Civil Liberties

Was there really a plot to blow up transatlantic airliners or were the police just using a pretext to fish for information by rounding up and questioning people they suspected were up to something without knowing precisely what? Will ministers eventually say, as they did after the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes and after the raid on that house in Forest Gate when another innocent man was shot, that it's better to err on the side of safety? Better a few innocents are shot than a terrorist act in which hundreds die?

Whatever the truth, the "security alert" last month in which a terrorist attack was said to be "imminent" allowed the state to project itself as the defender of the public. It is no such thing. The state is controlled by pro-capitalist politicians who pursue policies they consider to be in the general interest of British capitalism, even to the extent of putting the lives of the general public at risk.

The present government, led by Blair, has decided that it is in the best interest of the British capitalist class to tag along behind the US government's global pretensions, especially its so-called "War on Terror", which is really a struggle with certain Middle East states and disaffected Arab elites and their supporters for control of that oil-rich region.

The US government is committed to furthering the interests of US capitalism, which don't necessarily coincide with those of British capitalism, and there are pro-capitalist politicians in Britain, some apparently within the cabinet, who think that Blair might have gone too far in his pro-US stance. But it is not up to us as socialists to judge which politicians best represent the interest of the British capitalist class.

It is this pro-US capitalism policy option that has put the "British public" in danger by making them legitimate targets in the eyes of the Islamist opponents of US domination of the Middle East. It is just plain ridiculous for government ministers to try to deny this. What makes it worse is that neither the attack on Iraq nor (even less) giving Israel more time to bomb Lebanon enjoyed majority popular support.

But no government can leave such a vital decision as to whether or not to go to war to a popular vote. This is because the role of governments is to be "the executive committee of the ruling class" and, as the interests of the capitalist ruling class are at variance with those of the rest of us, such a decision cannot be left to us as there is no guarantee that our decision will coincide with what the ruling class judge to be in their interest. In fact, in the case of war, people spontaneously tend to be against it.

It is true that, as most people do support capitalism, if a government launches an effective enough propaganda barrage it can generally persuade people to support a war. But this takes time and decisions about war cannot wait. Blair is on record as saying that as a leader it is his duty to give a lead on going to war, even against majority popular opinion. In Britain, until recently and still formally, going to war was a government decision that didn't require even parliamentary approval.

Democracy and war are in fact incompatible. States have to have a minimal degree of popular support to function, but this need not extend much further than allowing the populace to decide every few years which group of pro-capitalist politicians are to staff the state and, exercising "leadership", use it to further national capitalist interests.

Truth may be the first casualty of war, but civil liberties come a close second. Whether real or manufactured, "terror plots" and "security alerts" provide a pretext for a state to further erode civil liberties inherited from a more liberal past, as the string of laws introduced by the Blair government to increase the powers of the state bears witness.

It can't be denied that there is a conflict going on involving attacks on innocent civilians on both sides. In Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon the US and/or its allies bomb villages and villagers. In America on 11 September five years ago and in Britain last 7 July, the other side killed innocent workers at or on their way to work. Socialists condemn both sides. And we don't swallow the propaganda that the state is there to protect us.

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Odds Uneven

The Centre for Economics and Business Research is predicting that there will be a million millionaires in Britain within a decade, leading to a bonanza in economic growth, marketable wealth and house prices (The Business, 13 August). "The thinktank is forecasting a 71 percent rise in house prices over 2006 to 2020..."

Whoa, whoa, stop! Stop right there. That's it. Enough predictions already. There is something fundamentally wrong with this sort of news reporting, even though the papers are full of it and we base our lives on it. Whether it's future prosperity, the price of oil, life on Mars, England's chances in the next World Cup, the winner of Big Brother XXXXVIII, or tomorrow's weather, the only really reliable prediction that anyone can make is that the predictions will probably be wrong. And there is a good reason why that is.

Statisticians refer to ordinary random events, such as the exact number of cornflakes that fall in your bowl, or the precise time that your bus turns up, as Type 1 events. The randomness of Type 1 events tends to disappear when you average them out over time, which means that they are measurable, and thus amenable to prediction with an acceptable margin of error. You can predict that your bus will turn up at exactly 8.31 if that's what it does on the average, and you won't be far wrong. But applying this predictive logic to complexities like the climate, science, the future or the economy just doesn't work, because when you introduce greater levels of complexity, or even if you extend the time frame, you inevitably introduce Type 2 events.

A Type 2 random event is a unique incident which it is not possible to foresee, and one which can cause seismic changes in the daily routine. Being run over is one such event, as is a lightning strike, a win on the lottery, or falling in love. There is no mechanism for predicting such events because the margin of error would be laughably gigantic, and history is littered with unprecedented events, such as the telephone, the computer, the internet, AIDS, economic crashes, and many wars. History, the economy, and society, are crammed with so many Type 2 random events, argues the statistician Nassim Nicholas Taleb, that it is sheer self-indulgent folly by anyone, government politician or horizon-tech scientist, to imagine they can predict anything at all (*New Scientist*, 1 July). Worse, he says,

we are not smart enough to realize how dumb we are, and we - or rather governments - persist in basing all kinds of plans and policies on these bogus social predictions, sometimes with disastrous effects.

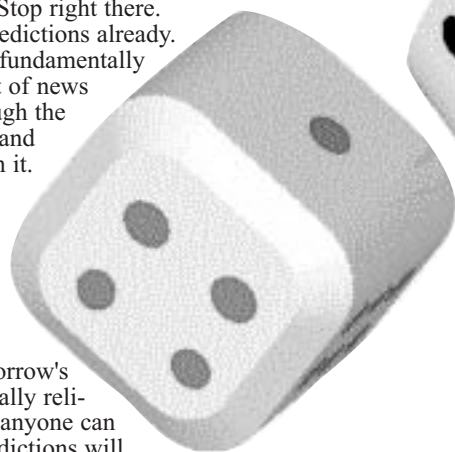
So why do we like to imagine that the world is a predictable place, even though we walk about with expressions of amazement permanently pasted to our faces? The explanation, he thinks, is that we can't stand randomness, so we try to create meaning out of randomness by revising the past with invented and deterministic narratives. Instead of admitting that, 'bugger, we never saw that coming', we pretend that 'all the signs pointed to this happening, it's obvious with hindsight'. We comfort ourselves with our own cleverness, after the event, forgetting that we were jumping like jackrabbits just before it.

This may sound like another application of that popular game of applying the logic of one scientific principle to fields outside its domain, in this case chaos theory. However there are useful nuggets to be mined from this perspective, especially by socialists.

One is the undoubted fact that capitalism does indeed represent itself as a stable and predictable process when in fact it isn't, and that people need to be aware of the illusion of permanence in which it wraps itself, like the Emperor's new clothes. If people understood that social change could be minutes, rather than millennia away, the motivation to get up and do something might be a lot stronger in a working class presently browbeaten into submission by the weight of history and the endless blank horizon of the present.

The other point relates once again to Pathfinder's own favourite theme, which is the easy assumptions that scientists themselves often make, especially in fields outside their own area of expertise. Are wars really Type 2 random events, 'black swans' so bizarre and unexpected that they boggle the mind as they appear out of nowhere? Do we really overlay an essentially chaotic world with a veneer of rationalized narrative, merely to comfort ourselves that there is an underlying logic when in fact there is none? Physicists have wrestled for years with the desperate and intractable problems of uniting all the known laws of cosmology and quantum mechanics under one roof to create a single, elegant Theory of Everything. They clearly believe that there is an underlying logic, even if they are buggered if they know what it is. Meanwhile in the external earthly realities of economics and social change we are expected to heed the post-modernists and the chaos statisticians, and abandon any thought of a grand narrative, an intrinsic pattern that makes sense of much, if not all, that goes on around us.

In fact, when you look at it like that, far from being a scientific proposition, this appeal to chaos seems like an unhealthy invitation to return to a world where gods and goblins roamed the earth and ideas of social progress could not begin to gain a foothold. If scientists believe that the great developments of history, both bad and good, were entirely unpredictable and that the human condition is a random cacophony of the cosmic absurd, Pathfinders suggests that they have been spending altogether too long staring down the microscope, and ignoring the elephant standing in the room next to their elbow.



Nostradamus - correctly predicted that people are gullible

Letters

Nuclear Power

Dear Editors,

I would like to take issue with the Pathfinders article "Radioactive Days" (August *Socialist Standard*). The anonymous author - shouldn't articles that do not express a consensus of socialist opinion be signed? - argues that continued reliance on nuclear fission as a major source of energy may be unavoidable, even after the establishment of socialism. However, no account is taken of the widely recognized fact that the supply not only of oil, but also of uranium and plutonium for fission reactors, is likely to run out in the course of the present century.

Conceivably, development of a closed fuel cycle might solve this problem, as well as that of radioactive wastes. It is also conceivable that nuclear fusion will become a viable alternative sooner than some people expect. Or perhaps a way will be found to store solar energy, enabling us to rely on the main fusion reactor in our vicinity--the sun.

Nevertheless, it is quite possible that none of these solutions will materialize in time to avert a real energy crisis. If this proves to be the case, it will not necessarily be because the technological obstacles are insuperable. The most likely cause will be the short time horizons used in capitalist profit calculations.

Given all these uncertainties, we need to think about a wide range of scenarios for energy policy in socialism. A guaranteed abundance of safe and non-polluting fusion or solar energy is one scenario. But humanity may have no choice but to adapt to a low-energy way of life.

STEPHEN SHENFIELD, Providence, USA

Reply: Actually, the Pathfinders column does not necessarily express a consensus of socialist opinion on every issue, as many of the scientific issues discussed are very much open for debate and development by socialists and others - *Editors*.

Asked and answered

Dear Editors,

I've spent some time over the past few months reading a lot about political and social structures, for no purpose other than my own interest. I, like many, am discontented with the situation as it stands. The solution proposed by your organisation resonates with me, as few others have. As a result, I have read Marxist works, and much about varied forms of left-wing politics like Leninism and Maoism, etc. I do, however, keep coming back to your site. I have read all of the available information but still have a few questions I was hoping you could answer. I sincerely hope you can find the time to assist.

1. In a practical sense, how would labour be distributed in a socialist society? I'm not suggesting some jobs are any less important than others, but how would personal ambition (not ambition for material reward, but ambition of a personal nature, to achieve and feel accomplishment in a particular field) be matched with the needs of society? Could I, for example, say 'I want to be an electrician' and get trained? And what if, for example, nobody wanted to be a cleaner? Would people be assigned jobs on a take it or take it basis or is there an element of negotiation? If so, how much?

2. What would happen to people who refused to work/contribute?

3. What is your position on the punish-

ment of serious criminals?

4. How are the creative arts perceived?

As a necessary part of a healthy society, or as unnecessary? Could someone be, for example, a full-time writer, in a socialist society as you describe? Even if they were no good at it?

BEN I. (by email).

Reply:

1. The general principle of socialist society of "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs" clearly recognises the obvious fact that different people have different abilities. How will these individual abilities be matched with the social need for particular jobs to be done? We can't give a blueprint (and don't want to, since this would be to try to dictate to the future when the details can only be decided democratically at the time), but we can imagine something like the "job centres" of today, only completely freed from any trace of coercion, monetary considerations and stigma. In other words, places where jobs to be done could be advertised and where people could go to volunteer to do them. Or maybe the whole thing could be done via the internet. If there is a shortage of people taking up a particular job, then a special effort would have to be made to encourage people to train for and take up these jobs. We are confident that socialist society will be able to find a practical solution to a practical problem such as this.

2. We don't think that, in the context of socialist society where a real community and community spirit will exist, there will be many people, if any, who would refuse to contribute. After all, there is nothing more boring than lying around all day trying to do nothing. Humans are social animals who

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September 11, 2001:

Reflections on a Somewhat Unusual Act of War

On the fifth anniversary of the al-Qaeda attack on New York and Washington, we reflect on this act of war and try to place it in its true political and moral context

As an act of war, the al-Qaeda attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre was somewhat unusual, though not unprecedented, in three respects.

First, the method used was non-standard. Standard military practice is to blow things and people up by dropping bombs or firing shells and missiles on them. But flying planes right into the target has been done before. Japanese kamikaze pilots used the technique against US warships in the Pacific during World War Two.

Second, al-Qaeda is a non-state actor. Such actors rarely have the capacity to carry through such a complex and costly operation. Therefore al-Qaeda must have had financial backing from wealthy sponsors - Osama bin Laden himself comes from an extremely wealthy family - and the support, or at least complicity, of one or more powerful states. In general, arranging wars is a pastime for members of the capitalist class, though they get hirelings to do the dirty work for them. Working people don't com-

mand the necessary resources.

Finally, it is a little unusual for the US to be on the receiving end of a military assault from abroad. For a comparable attack on the continental United States, you have to go back to 1814, when the British army entered Washington and burned down the White House and the Capitol.

In other ways the attack was not unusual in the least. As an atrocity it was par for the course. The death toll, initially estimated at 6,500, was later revised downward to about 2,800. Atrocities on a similar or larger scale are committed routinely by the US in other countries. To take just one example, 3-4,000 civilians were killed in the invasion of Panama in December 1989. Even if we start the reckoning with September 11, we find that the US was quick to even the score. According to an independent study, 3,767 Afghan civilians (hardly any of them connected with al-Qaeda) had been killed in bombing raids by 6 December, 2001. This figure does not include the far more numerous indirect casualties resulting from the cre-

ation of refugees and the disruption of food and other supplies.

Betrayal

The attack should not have been a total surprise, a bolt out of the blue. After all, it was merely the next step in a war that Osama bin Laden had formally declared on the United States in August 1996. He had built up a far-flung network of front companies, banks, "charities," and NGOs (e.g., the World Union of Moslem Youth) to raise funds and recruit young fighters for the war. He had already attacked American assets abroad, notably the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, and there was ample intelligence warning that a major attack on US soil was in the offing. So the parallel with Pearl Harbor is pretty weak.

And yet September 11 clearly did come as a shock to Bush. That was because the attack came from forces that the US, its side-kicks Britain and Israel, and the Bush family in particular had long regarded as friends, allies and partners. This explains why Bush

ignored the warnings - just as Stalin ignored warnings of impending attack by Nazi Germany in 1941 and felt "betrayed" by Hitler when the attack came.

American, British, and Israeli ruling circles saw the main threats to their economic and strategic interests in the Moslem world as coming from "communists" and secular nationalists backed by the Soviet Union (e.g. Nasser in Egypt, Ghaddafi in Libya, the PLO). When Khomeini's theocracy took power, Iran was added to the list of enemies, together with associated Shi'ite Islamist movements in other countries. Sunni Islamist movements, however, were encouraged - largely on the principle that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," although also because they seemed more interested in imposing ritual conformity on their own communities and in fighting "communism" than in challenging the substantive interests of the "infidel" powers.

The Islamists were also beneficiaries of the "neo-liberal" economic policies of Western institutions. In Pakistan, for example, the secular state schools collapsed in the 1980s as a result of IMF-mandated public spending cuts. This left the Saudi-financed religious schools (madrassas) as the only educational option available to boys who were not from wealthy families. (Girls, needless to say, didn't even have that option.) It was from these madrassas that the Taliban drew its recruits.

Moreover, relations with the leading Sunni Islamist power, Saudi Arabia, were and still are vital to Britain and the US in economic terms. The Saudi capitalist class, led by the royal family and influential families like the bin Ladens, not only sells these countries' oil but uses much of the proceeds to buy arms from them and invest in their economies. There are close and long-established personal and business ties between wealthy Saudis and British and American capitalists and politicians, including the father of the current US president and several members of his administration.

The Saudi-US alliance also entailed close military cooperation, above all in the fight against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden went to Pakistan in 1979 as an official of the Saudi intelligence service to finance, organize, and control the anti-Soviet Afghan resistance in collaboration with the CIA. It was here that Osama, who had trained as an engineer and economist with a view to taking part in the family business, acquired his taste for war.

Osama fell out with the Saudi royal family in 1991 when they allowed the US to set up military bases on the "holy" soil of Arabia following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. But even in exile Osama received frequent visits from relatives, who provided a channel of communication between him and the royal family. An understanding appears to have been reached. Osama would abstain from attacking targets inside Saudi Arabia and in return no action would be taken against his Saudi supporters, who included various members of his own and of other wealthy families (such as Khalid bin Mahfouz, the "banker of terror") and even certain royal princes. And the Saudi authorities did protect these people, refusing to provide US intelligence agencies with any information that might compromise them.

So September 11 originated in a "betrayal" by the Saudi capitalist class of their American friends, allies and partners. How can we account for such strange ingratitude to those to whom they owe their vast riches? It probably has to do with the cir-

cumstances in which the Saudi capitalist class came into being. It did not make itself through independent entrepreneurial activity. It was *made* when oil was discovered in Arabia (in 1938) and property rights in that oil were vested in the pre-existing royal house. It is a class of bedouin patriarchs turned rentiers who became capitalists by investing their revenue. As a result, it retains to some extent a pre-capitalist mentality that it expresses in religious terms, and has a deeply ambivalent attitude to the capitalist world in which it now operates.

The endless "war on terror"

Despite the shock effect, US ruling circles did not necessarily regard September 11 as an unalloyed evil. In his book *The New Crusade*, anti-war analyst Rahul Mahajan draws

"Combating terrorism and drugs are covers for the pursuit of higher-priority interests"

attention to a document entitled *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, issued in September 2000 by the Project for the New American Century, a neo-conservative think tank with links to the Bush administration. The authors call for increased military spending to preserve US "global preeminence," but add that such a programme will be politically impossible unless there is a "catastrophic and catalyzing event, like a new Pearl Harbor".

The purposes for which the fear generated by the al-Qaeda attack was exploited suggest that it filled this bill. The threat of



Artist's impression of the National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center

"terrorism" has been used to push through military programs ranging from anti-missile defence to germ warfare. Thus, a vast lab is being built near Washington called the National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center, where in violation of the 1972 biological and toxin weapons convention the most lethal bacteria and viruses are to be stockpiled (*Guardian Weekly*, 4-10 August, 2006). What a tempting target it will make for terrorist infiltration or attack!

The "war on terrorism" unleashed in the aftermath of September 11, against first Afghanistan and then Iraq, is not - so Mahajan argues - a war on terrorism, just as the "war on drugs" is not a war on drugs. Combating terrorism and drugs are both low priorities, and the "wars" against them are covers for the pursuit of higher-priority interests.

In Afghanistan the US had turned against the Taliban (previously welcomed as a force for "stability"), mainly because they

were unwilling to host oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia to Pakistan, and was looking for a pretext to overthrow them. Capturing Osama was that pretext, for it was obvious that the chaos of war would create ideal conditions for him to escape.

Iraq was invaded to secure control over its oil and in the hope of establishing a new strategic beachhead in the Middle East. Saddam had no ties with Islamic terrorism, just as he had no nuclear weapons. To the likes of Osama he was not even a genuine Moslem. Bush demanded of his experts that they find ties between Iraq and terrorism; when they replied that there were none, he pretended not to hear and reiterated his demand.

In October 2001 Vice President Dick Cheney declared that the war on terrorism "may never end -- at least, not in our lifetime" (*Washington Post*, 21 October, 2001). Am I alone in finding this suspicious? Ordinarily in a war it is considered important for morale to hold out some prospect of victory, however remote. Does Cheney want and need the "war" to go on forever?

The torture system

To sustain the facade of the "war on terror" it is necessary to arrest lots of people. As there is no real evidence against them, they are held without trial in secret facilities throughout the world, where - like the victims of Stalin's purges - they are tortured to extract the non-existent evidence. In her book *The Language of Empire*, Lila Rajiva describes for us the sickening tortures at Abu Ghraib, the prison complex outside Baghdad that the US occupation authorities took over from Saddam. The accounts and photos (some taken as exposés, others as souvenirs) are monotonous in their sameness. This is a clue: it strongly suggests that the torture is not a spontaneous practice of jailers and interrogators but a system designed by government experts and approved at the top.

The system goes by the code name R21 and is taught to British and American military intelligence personnel at the British Joint Services Interrogation Centre at Gilberthorne Priory, Chicksands, near Bedford (*Guardian*, May 8, 2004). It is designed to shock Moslem cultural sensibilities. Victims are stripped naked and hooded, savaged by dogs, and forced under threat of beatings to masturbate and simulate sexual acts in front of sniggering female soldiers (another triumph for sexual equality). That's just for starters, of course; it gets worse. I leave it to the reader to ponder what this means for the relative merits of Western and Middle Eastern "civilization."

And yet the people who authorize all these horrors know very well who is responsible for terrorism (the Islamist variety, that is) and where they are to be found. But no bombs have been dropped on the wealthy suburbs of Riyadh. No scions of the bin Ladens and bin Mahfouz, no princes of the House of Saud have been stripped naked, set upon by dogs or sexually humiliated. That's class justice for you! A few incidents, however regrettable, can't be allowed to spoil British and American relations with a vital ally and business partner. ■

STEFAN

After Hezbollah, war with Iran?

Was Israel's attack on Hezbollah part of preparations for a coming US attack on Iran?

As we go to press, a serious and already escalating crisis can be expected to go into overdrive the instant the Iranian government, at the moment under a UN deadline to stop uranium enrichment by 31 August, tells the UN what it can do with its resolution.

Sanctions will no doubt be announced, but to what effect and with what response from Iran remains to be seen. Iran has already intimated it would spark a global oil price crisis in response to UN sanctions, and it is unclear whether China and Russia - each with vested oil interests in Iran - will go along with any sanctions. The worst-case scenario is that the US will express feigned frustration at Iran's unwillingness to cooperate and use the rejected resolution as a chequered flag to attack Iran militarily.

It is against this backdrop that we can begin to set the present Middle East crisis in context, particularly the recent Israeli attack upon Lebanon. This latest act of Israeli aggression was not about capturing back the two Israeli soldiers kidnapped on 14 July but was rather, it would seem, about oil and the securing of other resources and about preparing for any wider conflict against Syria and Iran.

Planned in advance

There are numerous claims that the war in Lebanon had been planned in advance by Israel. Reporting from Tel Aviv for the *San Francisco Chronicle* (21 July), Matthew Kalman wrote: "More than a year ago, a senior Israeli army officer began giving PowerPoint presentations, on an off-the-record basis, to US and other diplomats, journalists and think tanks, setting out the plan for the current operation in revealing detail."

Speaking to CNN, veteran investigative reporter Seymour Hersch said: "July was a pretext for a major offensive that had been in the works for a long time. Israel's attack was going to be a model for the attack they really want to do. They really want to go after Iran." (*Guardian*, 14 August).

In bombarding Lebanon and the Gaza strip (Gaza is still being bombed) the objective was to neutralise two opponents of Israel - and the US - Hezbollah and Hamas. Hezbollah's fire power and missile capabilities needed to be tested. Israel was unsure of the number of rockets in the hands of Hezbollah (some said 20,000) or indeed their range. Now they know. The Israeli bombardment of key roads and bridges and passage to Syria can serve no other function than to cut of the weapons supply route to Hezbollah. By striking pre-emptively Israel seems to have planned to destroy as many Hezbollah weapons as possible in advance of any rocket attack on Israel resulting from any US-allied bombardment of Iran.

Oil and water

Widely unreported in the Western popular media and brought to a wider audience by Michel Chossudovsky, a Canadian economics professor, on the Global Research website (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/>), was the inauguration of the Ceyhan-Tblisi-Baku (BTC) oil pipeline. This links the Caspian Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean, and was opened one day before Hezbollah's kidnapping of the two Israeli soldiers that ostensibly started the recent war in Lebanon.

The BTC pipeline is anticipated to carry a million barrels of oil a day to Western markets. In attendance at the inau-

"Tel Aviv announced it was in for a 'long war' - clearly not with Hezbollah"

guration ceremony were BP's CEO Lord Browne and senior officials from the UK and USA, along with Israel's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, accompanied by a delegation of top Israeli oil officials.

The BP-dominated pipeline skirts the Russian Federation, cutting through new pro-US states Georgia and Azerbaijan, countries allied with NATO and with a standing military pact with Israel. Israel already gets 20 percent of its oil from Azeri oil fields and this new pipeline is set to

increase Israeli imports from the Caspian basin. Israel is now tipped to be a key player in the East Mediterranean oil transport protection racket.

Officially, the BTC pipeline will be channelling oil to Western markets. What is not admitted, however, is that some of this oil will be redirected towards Israel via a proposed underwater pipeline from Ceyhan in Turkey to the Israeli port of Ashkelon, and from there via a pipeline system to the Red Sea.

The plan not only seems to serve Israeli oil consumption needs, but also plays a part in the US's wider game of global-politics. Oil channelled from Ashkelon to the Red Sea will then be re-exported from the Red Sea port of Eilat to Asian markets. This will help undermine the inter-Asian energy market eventually weakening the position of Russia in Central Asia and cutting off China from Central Asia's oil reserves.

In April of this year Ankara and Tel Aviv publicised their intention to create four pipelines which would bypass Syrian and Lebanese territory. As the *Jerusalem Post* (11 May) reported:

"Turkey and Israel are negotiating the construction of a multi-million-dollar energy and water project that will transport water, electricity, natural gas and oil by pipelines to Israel, with the oil to be sent onward from Israel to the Far East."

The scheme further envisages a pipeline to carry water to Israel from upstream Anatolian rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Not only is this plan catered for in the recently-announced military pact between Israel and Ankara, its implementation will be devastating for Syria and Iraq. The execution of this joint Israeli-Turkish venture requires that land and sea routes between the Ceyhan border, through Syria and Lebanon, and to the Lebanese-Israeli border, be militarised.

Michel Chossudovsky asks in his article *The war on Lebanon and the battle for oil*:

"Is this not one of the hidden objectives of the war on Lebanon? Open up a space which enables Israel to control a vast territory extending from the Lebanese border through Syria to Turkey."

Israel is keen to play a more dominant role in the Middle East and seeks to achieve a degree of economic autonomy by becoming a key player in oil politics. Its military programme is increasingly looking like being tailored to the region's strategic oil pipelines and by the Western oil companies commanding the pipeline passages. Of course to punch above its weight it needs outside help, hence alliances with the US and more recently with Turkey and NATO.

Chossudovsky's oft-cited piece *"Triple Alliance": The US, Turkey, Israel and the War on Lebanon* details the alliances and agreements which apparently underpin the



Beirut airport after an Israeli attack



Clockwise from top: The BTC oil pipeline; Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah; Hamas spokesperson Khaled Mashaal



war with Hezbollah:

"We are not dealing with a limited conflict between the Israeli Armed Forces and Hezbollah as conveyed by the Western media. The Lebanese War Theatre is part of a broader US military agenda, which encompasses a region extending from the Eastern Mediterranean into the heartland of Central Asia. The war on Lebanon must be viewed as 'a stage' in this broader 'military road map'."

Significant, for Chossudovsky, is the Turkey-Israel alliance which involves military and intelligence sharing on Iraq, Iran and Syria, as well as joint military exercises and training.

Pepe Escobar, writing for *Asia Times*, stresses Israel's water needs as partly behind the recent war in Lebanon. :

"There's also the all-important matter of the waters of the Litani River in southern Lebanon. Israel might as well prepare the terrain now for the eventual annexation of the Litani. Beyond Lebanon, Israel is mostly interested also in Syria. The motive: the all-important pipeline route from Kirkuk, in Iraqi Kurdistan, to Haifa. Enter Israel as a major player in Pipelineistan. So Israel wants to grab water (and territory) from Palestine, water (and territory) from Lebanon and oil from Iraq. This all has to do with the inevitable - the 21st-century energy wars."

(http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HG26Ak02.html)

Seeking greater independence and an enhanced role in the Middle East, the smell of profits all around, Israeli aggression now becomes more understandable

Long war

Tel Aviv recently announced it was in for a "long war" - clearly not with Hezbollah. It has been stockpiling weapons for several years and was re-supplied throughout the war with Hezbollah by the US. On top of its arsenal of 200 nuclear warheads it has in excess of 500 bunker-busting bombs, only a few, by all accounts, used recently in Lebanon. Clearly Israel is preparing for a

widening and intense conflict.

Speaking of the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said: "We need to make clear to Syria and Iran that there is a choice: come into the international community and play by the same rules as the rest of us, or be confronted." Can this hypocritical statement be interpreted as anything other than a serious threat of violence to those Middle Eastern countries that would stand in the way of profit-hungry masters of war and their ambitions for global domination of the planet's vital resources?

Seymour Hersh has repeatedly asserted that President Bush ordered all-out war against Iran shortly after his re-election in 2004. Pat Buchanan's *American Conservative*, amongst other sources, sides with Hersh in arguing that vice-president Dick Cheney has drawn up a war plan for Iran inclusive of the possible use of nuclear weapons.

US Defence Secretary Don Rumsfeld has placed US forces on alert and Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce Carlson, commander of the 8th Air Force acknowledges: "We're now at the point where we are essentially on alert. We have the capacity to plan and execute global strikes in half a day or less."

Dan Plesch (*Guardian*, 8 August) suggests President Bush has at his disposal:

"200 strategic bombers (B52-B1-B2-F117A) and US Navy Tomahawk cruise missiles. One B2 bomber dropped 80,500lb bombs on separate targets in 22 seconds in a test flight. Using just half the available force, 10,000 targets could be attacked almost simultaneously. This strike power alone is sufficient to destroy all major Iranian political, military, economic and transport capabilities."

Dangerous times

We live at a dangerous stage of human history, in which the greatest crime a country can commit is to have more than its fair share of resources in a world in which the leading superpower is seeking full-spectrum dominance. Iran's real and unforgivable

crime - leaving aside its refusal to halt its uranium enrichment programme - is to have enviable oil and gas reserves, to control access to the Persian Gulf, which is a vital oil and gas transshipment route to Europe, Japan, and the rest of the world, and to have contemplated oil deals with a serious rival for US supremacy, China. With China expected to have oil demands similar to US levels within 20 years, already consuming vast resources of coal, iron and steel, not to mention almost 70 percent of the world's cement supplies on a single dam project, the panic button has clearly been pressed.

As Socialists we are naturally fearful as we watch events unfold; fearful for our class, our fellows throughout the world and for whom we hold no ill feelings. As always, we refuse to take sides in conflict, seeing all war as rooted in the desire to make profit, and viewing workers, wherever they are, united as one class with the same basic needs and common interest, diametrically opposed to the interests of those who would urge them to kill each other.

Before the slaughter begins again, we once more take the opportunity to declare our heartfelt solidarity with the workers of all countries, and their true common cause. We appeal to workers to organise consciously and politically and to use the power at their disposal to head off the threatening bloodshed, and secure the space we need in order to build a world of peace and stability. As ever, we appeal to the workers of all lands to join with us in campaigning for a system of society where there are no leaders, no classes, no states or governments, no borders, no force or coercion; a world where the earth's natural and industrial resources are commonly owned and democratically controlled and where production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit and used for the benefit of all; a world of free access to the necessities of life. A world without waste, or want, or war. ■

JOHN BISSETT

Globalisation - what does it mean?

The second part of our article analysing capitalist globalisation. Last month we looked at how this affected capital. This month we examine its impact on the world's population at large.

The continuing surge in globalisation has had profound human and social effects on vast numbers of people, the fundamental nature of these effects depending on their class position in society, i.e. whether they are capitalists or workers. On the one hand the opportunities for the capitalist class to accumulate wealth has increased multilaterally with, for example, politicians and civil servants in the poorer states quite happy to find the funding for trade fairs, economic surveys, development studies, and visits by heads of state in an effort to increase the profits of that class from the global market.

On the other hand this global frenzy is resulting in upheaval for whole communities, while the transition from rural to

urban living is in turn altering human geography radically with rural areas either becoming human deserts or concentrated industrial sprawl. Likewise most global housing areas resemble one another to such an extent that even the shantytowns are becoming uniform in the type of building materials used.

When these social transformations are combined with factors like the increasing mobility of labour - mobility from the peasantry to the modernity of wage slavery - they come with well-known costs for the disempowered majority: misery, destitution, family breakdown and homelessness. The most visible aspects of this are to be seen with thousands of families living on the streets of Calcutta, or those families forced to scrape an existence by living on a waste tip in San Paulo, or perhaps a PhD from Addis Ababa University driving a cab in New York city, let alone those staffing a call centre in New Delhi alongside a wall full of useless diplomas.

Such potential human resources being wasted to further the interests of profit maximisation cannot but have an impact on rising social expectations and aspirations. These then come into conflict with people's sense of achievement. Consequently, we are witnessing a sharp rise in the incidence of mental health. And the resulting increase in cases of anxiety, depression, insomnia, mood swings and stress, are to be evidenced in the packed waiting areas of the mental health clinics, along with the expanding appointments for the services of psychotherapists. Add

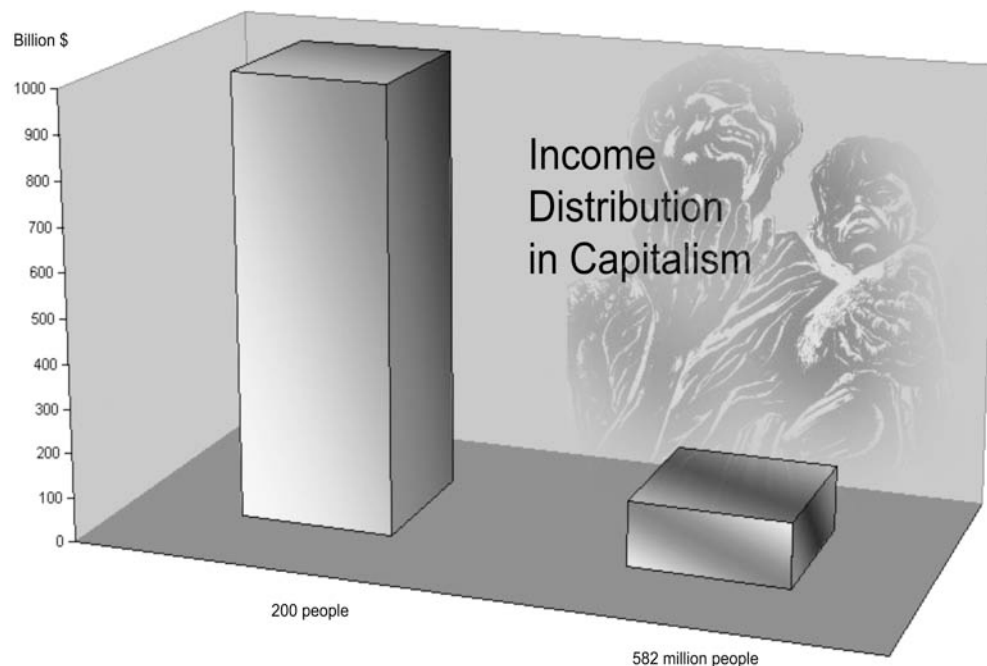
this to the overcrowded waiting lists for the physically sick in the developed and developing countries and many global health services there are in crisis management mode.

Inequality

Whilst this human tragedy unfolds our political masters are still chanting the mantra that some of the wealth created will eventually 'trickle down' to those 2.8 billion people living on less than \$2 a day and also to those 1.3 billion living in even more extreme poverty. Unable to solve the problem of absolute and relative poverty, the global politicians have now agreed in their misguided wisdom to try and tackle the problems and issues of extreme poverty only. By this they mean those 1.3 billion people who have to their cost found that the system of wage slavery holds no guarantees of the provision of a living wage, and subsequently finding it impossible to exist on less than a dollar a day. And where the material difference between relative, absolute and, and if you so wish extreme poverty, is so profoundly stark that it creates a sense of inevitability and disempowerment, it is invariably accompanied by disillusionment. This is especially so in cultural terms, with millions being forced from the rural poverty of subsistence living into becoming a landless peasant within an urban environment dominated by the tyranny of wages and surrounded by the advertising of mass consumerism.

The WHO, UN, World Bank, and Jubilee 2000 have reported many of the indicators of global inequality in recent years, and summarised they are:

- One-fifth of the world's population is living in extreme poverty.
 - 100 million children live or work on the street.
 - Half the world's population are lacking access to the most essential medicines.
 - The combined wealth of the world's 200 richest people reached \$1 trillion in 1999; the combined income of 582 million living in the 43 least developed countries is \$146b.
 - 70 per cent of the world's poor and two-thirds of the world's illiterate are women.
 - An estimated 827.5m people are undernourished. Of which 647m, or over one-third (37 percent) consist of the world's children.
 - More than 30,000 children die each day from easily preventable diseases.
 - The top fifth own 86 per cent of the world's wealth, while the lowest fifth own just one per cent.
 - The wealth of the world's three wealthiest billionaires is more than that of the GNP of all the least developing countries and their 600 million people.
 - When Argentina defaulted on its debts, 300,000 people were forced to live off the garbage dumps surrounding the city of Buenos Aires.
 - The number of people living in extreme poverty has actually risen by 28m.
- Yet it is not only developing and undeveloped countries who are experiencing issues of inequality; even in the major developed countries, like the US, income inequality is now on the increase with one report claiming:
- "The gap between rich and



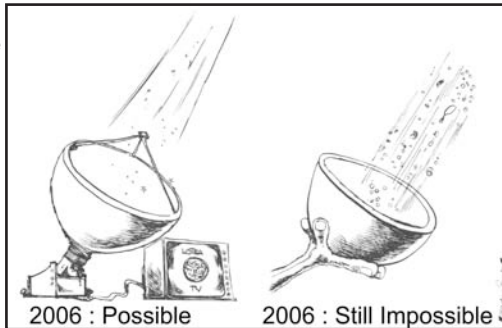
poor in America is the widest in 70 years, according to a new study published by the Center for the Budget and Policy Priorities. The research, based on newly released figures from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, shows that the top 1 percent of Americans - who earn an average of \$862,000 each after tax (or \$1.3m before tax) - receive more money than the 110m Americans in the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution, whose income averages \$21,350 each year. The income going to the richest 1 percent has gone threefold in real terms in the past twenty years, while the income of the poorest 40 percent went up by a more modest 11 percent" (*BBC News Online*, 25 September, 2003: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3138232.stm>).

Much the same picture is painted in the UK with the figures from the National Statistics Office and Inland Revenue for 2002/3 showing that the richest 5 percent owned 43 percent of the wealth, while the poorest 50 percent owned just 6 percent; similarly the top 2.4m households owned assets worth around £1,300b, while the bottom 12m owned assets of around £150m. Also according to a Policy Institute report last year, 22 percent of the UK population are still living below the poverty line, including 3.8m children (or 30 percent of all children), 2.2m pensioners, and 6.6m working age adults. In effect a total of 12.6m people in the UK population are confronted with higher mortality; lower education outcomes; less decent homes; and financial exclusion, due to surviving on, or below 60 percent of median income after housing costs.

On a much more local scale the Child Poverty Action Group revealed in their publication *'Poverty - the Facts* (5th edition)' that over 80 percent of the children living in the Townhill district of Swansea were defined as poor; benefits make up a larger proportion of total income in Wales than in England or Scotland, with a higher proportion of children living in households claiming income support - 18.9 percent - compared to the UK-wide figure of 13.5 percent; and 32 percent of pensioners in Inner London were affected by income poverty, and children in London are even worse off than those in Wales with 24 percent of households in receipt of income support, or other means tested benefits.

Socialist Outlook

These are just some of the facts and figures that are considered normal to the modern workings of capitalism. They help to serve the purpose of illustrating that the globalisation of capitalism has masked a growing polarisation both within and between countries and that local circumstances are merely a reflection of the global situation where 'trickle-down' economics has in reality turned into a flood of inequality, destitution and instability. This confirms what Marxists have consistently stated that the prosperity for the few is dependant on the deprivation of the many. Indeed, despite the huge amounts of abundant wealth created by workers within capitalism, the system is incapable of accounting for the fact that the cases of millions of people dying through malnourishment, or because they lack clean water, adequate shelter, and health care is on the increase. This alone serves as a damning confirmation that there hasn't been any fundamental shift in the ownership of wealth. It also reaffirms our posi-



tion that this state of affairs is likely to continue, besides endorsing the contention that the capitalist class will use either system of trading - protectionism or free trade - when it suits their purpose to accumulate wealth.

Failure to grasp the revolutionary challenge this analysis poses has led to the formation of the anti-globalisation protest movement which campaigns on the issues of extreme poverty, world debt and the adoption of protectionist measures for those developing and undeveloped countries who have found that the reality of 'free trade' only applies primarily to the G8 nations. Whilst there is no denying that such campaigns have made tremendous strides in highlighting the effects of globalisation, when it comes to outlining proposals for viable alternatives to capitalism, their mindset is locked onto the belief that a 'fairer' global society is possible within the framework of capitalism. Their main tactic is to bring mass protest to bear on politicians and on institutions like the G8, WTO, IMF and World Bank, despite the fact that such a mindset of working towards a 'fairer' global society has a long history of failure, based as it is on the false assumption that capitalism can be made to work in the interest of all - rich and poor alike.

Although the effects of globalisation with the human suffering it brings can lead to bleak and negative conclusions about the future, it is also possible to draw different conclusions, ones that are far more positive and meaningful. For what comes out of this rather gloomy picture is the certainty that capitalism has outlived its usefulness as a progressive mode of production. For it reached its early retirement at the turn of the 20th Century - once it had established itself as a global system consisting of integrated and interdependent productive units. As soon as it reached this point it had fulfilled its purpose and turned into a global monster of uncontrollable destructiveness.

With capitalism failing to deliver for the majority it has become more obvious that now is the time to move on to a system of common ownership that is capable of meeting the self-defined needs of the great majority and not just the interests of a wealthy minority. In order to attain such a system of free access an essential prerequisite is for a majority of the global working class to reach an understanding that their sense of social achievement can only be fulfilled by becoming conscious in class terms that capitalism can never be made to operate in their interests. Once they have reached this revolutionary conclusion - and only then - will capitalism lose its basis of support and be replaced by socialism. ■

BRIAN JOHNSON



Cooking the Bank Way (1)

Doing Business, the World Bank Way

The World Bank exists to oil the wheels of capitalism: to make

funds available for investment and various infrastructure projects. Basically it tries to ensure that things run as smoothly and predictably as possible, and always in the interests of the currently rich and powerful. Of course, this being capitalism, things do not always go as planned.

One of the ways in which the World Bank seeks to serve capitalism is by providing information about investment in different countries. It runs a website, <http://www.doingbusiness.org/>, which gives "objective measures of business regulations and their enforcement", so making it easier for capitalists to know the pitfalls of investing in various parts of the world. The data on the site cover everything from starting a business to paying taxes, enforcing contracts and procedures for bankruptcy. One of the topics dealt with is employing workers, where the indicators, as they are termed, are how difficult it is to hire a new worker, restrictions on expanding or contracting the number of working hours, the difficulty and expense of dismissing a redundant worker and their costs (expressed in weeks of wages).

So we learn that the USA gets a score of zero for difficulty of hiring and rigidity of hours, and a redundant worker costs nothing (!) in terms of firing costs. The UK has higher scores, including 33 weeks' wages as the cost of dismissing a redundant worker. Germany has much higher scores on all these, and 66 weeks' wages as the cost of dismissal. Note that in all cases a higher figure means 'more rigid regulations', so low scores are good as far as the World Bank is concerned - for instance, the US has little to stop an employer cutting or increasing working hours. Russia has a mixture of scores: zero for difficulty of hiring but nearly as high as Germany for rigidity of hours.

From a working class point of view, however, the real issue is not how reliable the scores are or how they differ among continents and countries. Rather, the crucial thing is what they reveal about how the bosses view you and me. We aren't people with families and needs, rather we are just another aspect of doing business. The ease of acquiring a license or obtaining credit is put on a par with how easy it is to alter our working hours or how easy and expensive it is to dismiss us if we become redundant, i.e. no longer able to produce profits in the way that is required.

For capitalism, members of the working class aren't really human beings, just costs of production, cogs in the great wheel of making a profit and keeping the bosses in the style to which they have become accustomed. A society which is based on production for use will be centred around people, around satisfying our needs as both producers and consumers, as parents and friends. Then we can say goodbye to the World Bank and their offensive economic scores.

Death of a Tendency

The recent death of Ted Grant at the age of 93 has been a landmark, albeit a minor one, in British political history



Grant at
Speakers' Corner,
London, 1942

Grant was the last of the three great gurus of the British Trotskyist movement and the *eminence grise* of what became known as the Militant Tendency. Along with his two main Trotskyist rivals, Gerry Healy (of the Socialist Labour League/Workers' Revolutionary Party) and Tony Cliff (of International Socialism/the Socialist Workers' Party) he had a considerable input into what became - with the decline of the Communist Party - the most significant political trend to the left of the Labour Party.

Born Isaac Blank just outside Johannesburg, he changed his name to Grant when he came to Britain during the turbulent mid-1930s with a small band of other South African militants, convinced that it would be more fertile political territory than his country of birth. Attracted to the political ideas of the exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, this small group of South African émigrés had already been influential in the founding of South Africa's first Trotskyist organisation, the Workers' International League, and soon made a mark on the fledgling British Trotskyist movement. Of the two small British Trotskyist groupings of the time, the Balham Group and the Revolutionary Socialist League (later to be called the Militant Labour League, selling a newspaper called *Militant*), Grant and his colleagues were attracted towards the latter. In what became a tradition of the Trotskyist movement not only in Britain but internationally, they soon split from it though to form their own organisation, this time a British version of the Workers' International League they had left behind in South Africa. Among those joining them was the Scottish orator Jock Haston and a voluble Irish militant, Gerry Healy.

Fourth International

In 1938 Leon Trotsky and his followers set up an international organisation intended to

rival the worldwide Communist ('Third') International. This 'Fourth International' cast around for a British section, but the tiny group around Grant, Haston and Healy was ignored and the franchise went instead to the larger Militant Labour League. For this key event in Trotskyist history then, Grant and his comrades were shunned and Grant himself never got to meet Trotsky before the 'Old Man's' assassination by Soviet agents in Mexico in 1940.

During the Second World War, Grant's WIL was active on the industrial front and soon began to eclipse its parent organisation in both membership and influence - so much so, that by 1944 the Fourth International persuaded the two organisations to merge, in what was effectively a WIL takeover. The new organisation created was called the Revolutionary Communist Party and was the first (and last) time the British Trotskyist movement was united in the one organisation.

Grant became editor of the RCP's paper, *Socialist Appeal*, and Grant and Haston were the organisation's first delegates to the Fourth International. The RCP existed for three years and grew to 500-600 members, being a thorn in the side of the Communist Party before, in true Trotskyist fashion, internal strife led to decline and a split.

Significantly, in the late 1940s three main factions had begun to emerge which were to be the main tendencies within the Trotskyist movement in Britain in the decades thereafter. Those around the Palestinian émigré Tony Cliff developed a distinctive version of the theory that what existed in the Soviet Union was a form of state capitalism (though only after Stalin's accession to power in 1928) and therefore couldn't be supported by socialists, while the groups around Grant and Healy held on to Trotsky's own belief that what existed in Russia was a workers' state, albeit a degenerated one. Indeed, the Grant and Healy fac-

tions had much in common politically, and it was mainly the bitter personal hostility that developed between the two men that kept their groupings separate.

Secret organisation

In the early 1950s, Grant and his small number of followers started a magazine called *International Socialist*. Grant lived in London and worked as a night-time telephone operator, which left him free to pursue his political work as a Trotskyist during the day. At this time he began to build up a close political relationship with a Trotskyist from Birkenhead called Jimmy Dean, who was the driving force behind *Rally*, a paper popular with the youth section of the Labour Party in the North West of England (and soon edited from Liverpool by a teenage Pat Wall, later one of the Militant-supporting Labour MPs).

By 1955 Grant and his supporters decided that the time was right to found a new organisation. Harking back to the group Grant first joined on his arrival from South Africa, it was called the Revolutionary Socialist League and its first General Secretary was Jimmy Dean. It effectively fused two small Trotskyist bases in London and Liverpool where Grant had an influence, and was a tightly-knit organisation built on the Leninist principles of the vanguard party, being hierarchical and secretive in almost equal measure, operating like other Trotskyist groups before it as a clandestine faction within the Labour Party.

Coincidentally, two years earlier the Trotskyist Fourth International had split. Healy's faction had the UK franchise but went off with the splitters, leaving a vacancy for a British Section which the leadership of the FI allegedly tried to fill by placing an advertisement in *Tribune*, which Grant answered. By 1957, the RSL was given the British franchise by the FI but advanced only sporadically, starting a new paper

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called *Socialist Fight*, but otherwise being eclipsed by other Trotskyist groups, particularly Healy's. At the time the Healy, Cliff and Grant factions were all building up support by working inside the Labour Party as secret parties within a party, focusing especially on the Labour League of Youth, but Grant's faction was so unsuccessful that the FI forced it to merge with an up-and-coming young group of Trotskyists in Nottingham around Ken Coates called the International Group. When this marriage of convenience led to the inevitable divorce within a year or so, the FI took the opportunity to rescind Grant's franchise altogether, giving it instead to the Nottingham faction which by then had turned itself into the International Marxist Group (IMG), a current which went on to develop a strong student base under the leadership of Tariq Ali.

Militant

The loss of the Fourth International franchise was an understandable blow to Grant, but around the same time his group had begun to take steps which were to prove more fruitful, the most significant of which was the creation of a new publication to be called *Militant - for Labour and Youth*. Its editor was a young Liverpoolian with strong organisational abilities called Peter Taaffe, who became Grant's lieutenant-in-chief, while Grant himself was political editor. The striking design of the paper was created by Roger Protz, later of the Campaign For Real Ale, but who was a notable activist at various times in each of the three main Trotskyist factions in British politics (later, in Cliff's International Socialists, he became editor of *Socialist Worker*). It was to be growing sales of *Militant*, combined with systematic, organised activity in the Labour Party, which was eventually to bear fruit for Grant's faction.

By 1966 they were the only one of the three main Trotskyist factions still inside the Labour Party. Healy's group had, by the early 1960s, almost completely taken over the (now renamed) Labour Party Young Socialists and after several attempts they were eventually expelled, with Grant personally refusing at one stage to vote to keep Healy-ites in the Party. Cliff's faction disengaged from Labour in the mid-1960s, seeing propaganda opportunities in disassociating itself from Wilson's Labour government, leaving the field free for Grant. By 1970 Grant's RSL had a majority on the Labour Party Young Socialists Executive and from 1972 onwards always had one of its members on the Labour NEC as the LPYS representative.

Throughout the 1970s, the influence of what by this time was becoming known as the 'Militant Tendency' grew apace, both in the Labour Party and trade unions. Grant's organisation moved from being the least well-known of the major Trotskyist sects to becoming the most well-known, with something of a 'workerist' face, placing less emphasis on building up student support than most Trotskyist groups and more on recruiting the skilled and semi-skilled working class, especially local government workers.

By the 1980s Militant's growth and influence was such that it could claim scores of Labour councillors across Britain as 'supporters' (when in reality they were RSL members who couldn't publicly admit to being a 'party within a party'). In addition,

they could claim several Labour Parliamentary candidates - three of whom (Dave Nellist, Terry Fields and Pat Wall) eventually became MPs, and - most controversially of all - they took effective control of Liverpool City Council, with Derek Hatton as the council's Deputy Leader and Tony Mulhearn (a long-time RSL member more trusted by Grant) as his aide de camp.

The mid-1980s, when the Tendency claimed over 8,000 'supporters', was the peak of Militant's influence on British politics and the nearest Grant came to fulfilling his dream of creating a mass Trotskyist base within the Labour Party. But its size, influence and the notoriety attached to it by the mainstream press led to the first systematic attempt to deal with Trotskyist infiltration in the Labour Party since the expulsion of the Healy-ites. Earlier, in 1975, Lord Underhill had written a report on Militant's activities in the Labour Party for a left-wing dominated Labour NEC that chose at the time to do nothing about it. But in the 1980s the Labour leadership acted, first under Michael Foot and then under Neil Kinnock, with his famous attack on the Militants on Liverpool City Council at the 1985 Labour Party conference, after they had deployed the tactic

“(Grant) rejected real socialism for the type of politics that cast him in the role of leader”

of refusing to set a rate, issuing 30,000 council workers with redundancy notices.

Labour initially started by picking on the most obvious candidates for expulsion, the five members of *Militant's* Editorial Board, including Grant and Taaffe, who were expelled in 1983. After this, large and increasing numbers of their comrades were systematically put outside the Party they claimed was 'the mass party of the working class'.

Political positions

Throughout the lifetime of the RSL, 'entryism' into the Labour Party was one of its defining characteristics as a Trotskyist current. Others used entryism as a tactic, including Cliff and Healy, but for Grant's group it appeared to amount to more than this - it was a defining political position. Sometimes called 'deep entryism' it was not simply about a Trotskyist organisation going into the Labour Party, building up support and effectively raiding it for new members before emerging into the outside world stronger and fitter. For Grant, as Militant's main theoretician, the task of his tendency was to 'win the Labour Party to socialism' on the grounds that a united Labour and trade union movement under a Trotskyist leadership was unstoppable.

The means for achieving this goal was deep entryism plus a particular variety of Trotsky's 'transitional demands' programme, a strategy developed from Lenin's premise that the working class in capitalism was not capable through its own efforts of develop-

ing a socialist consciousness. This transitional programme was a carefully calculated list of demands - such as massive public works programmes, the nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, and an implausibly generous minimum wage - which would be superficially attractive to supporters of reforms in the wider Labour and trade union movement, and which Militant thought contained the seeds of a future socialist society. The intention was a dishonest one, for Grant and Militant's other leaders knew that these demands were not generally capable of realisation within the normal politics of capitalism - indeed, that was the very point of advocating them. The resultant anger they expected within the working class when these demands were unmet would lead, they hoped, to a lurch towards the left under the leadership of the Trotskyist vanguard itself - the RSL.

The desire to stay in the Labour Party at all costs coupled with distinctive transitional demands that could lead to a Trotskyist leadership introducing 'socialism' (really state-run capitalism based on nationalisation) via an Enabling Act in parliament - and supported by workers' councils in the industrial field - was what really defined Militant in relation to the other Trotskyist sects. Also, and uniquely, the RSL quickly identified the arena of local government as a means for criticising traditional, piecemeal reformist politics (saying they would always oppose rent and rates increases), raising its programme of more radical transitional demands instead as the 'bridge to socialism':

"To lift the horizon of the local parish-pump politicians on to the broader national and international field - this is the first task of the revolutionary Councillor . . . It is necessary within the Labour Groups and in open council to point out the limitations of particular struggles and reforms and show how (in theory and practice) reformism (nationally and locally) cannot resolve the contradictions of capitalism." (RSL 'Notes on Council Work', by Ellis Hillman, 1961.)

These socialist-sounding phrases, in reality masking the advocacy of what were, in effect, just more radical reforms of capitalism, was typical of their entryist tactic, as later exemplified in Liverpool. Combined with their relentless workerism and disdain for non-economic issues, this constituted their 'Unique Selling Point' within the Trotskyist milieu (unlike others, Militant had relatively little interest in sexual or student politics, or supporting Third World nationalist movements).

These were the key perspectives handed down by Grant himself, consistently over decades. Indeed, it was often said by his supporters and opponents alike that Grant was saying the same things in the 1980s as he had been saying in the 1940s, and his book *The Unbroken Thread: the Development of Trotskyism Over 40 Years* is testament to this. This would have to include his oft-repeated claim (following Trotsky, and like his rival Gerry Healy of the WRP) that capitalist collapse leading to a Trotskyist leadership of a revolutionary working class was imminent in 'the coming period' of the next 10-15 years, somewhat in the perpetual manner of 'tomorrow never comes'.

Post-Militant

In the eventually, capitalism outlived Grant himself. Indeed, Grant's end appears to have been a rather sad one, in an old people's home, years after having been kicked out of

the Labour party and then, rather more remarkably, the RSL itself. The campaign of the Labour leadership in the 1980s against Militant had been so successful that by 1992 the majority of the RSL, led by Taaffe, came to the conclusion that continuing with entryism was pointless and stood 'Militant Labour' candidates against the official Labour Party, with mixed success. A group around Grant and one of his protégés, Alan Woods, refused to accept this reversal of what the Tendency had always stood for, and were expelled.

Just as Grant had borrowed from early Trotskyist groups when founding the Revolutionary Socialist League and its paper, *Militant*, so this expelled rump from the RSL started a new paper called *Socialist Appeal*, the name of the journal Grant edited while one of the leaders of the RCP just after the war. Never more than a couple of hundred at most, this group made little impact, while after a period of serious decline the slightly larger Militant Labour eventually voted in 1997 to dishonestly turn itself into the 'Socialist Party' (of England and Wales - SPEW to its enemies), effectively trying to usurp the name of the SPGB. This grouping has since declined further, though its leading elements in Scotland, such as Tommy Sheridan, were instrumental in forming the rather more successful but equally reformist Scottish Socialist Party.

The modern legacy of Ted Grant is an interesting one, for in many respects he was the most successful of the three main British Trotskyist leaders, while still falling well short of his ultimate goal. From a socialist perspective, the Militant Tendency (like the other Trotskyist groups) did much to muddy the waters of revolutionary politics in the

UK, posing as socialist while supporting the usual Trotskyist stew of radical reformist demands with the long-term aim of state-run capitalism organised by a Leninist vanguard party, another classic 'dictatorship over the proletariat', with Grant as leader-in-waiting.

Grant knew full well of the real socialist alternative promoted by the Socialist Party of Great Britain and our companion parties overseas (he debated Socialist Party



Grant appealing against expulsion from the Labour Party in 1983

speaker Tony Turner in 1945 and was wont to deride us as 'ultra left' sectarians) but he rejected real socialism for the type of politics that cast him in the role of leader, manipulating the mass of the proletariat towards a 'revolutionary situation'. But, as history proved, the working class were not so easily manipulated by Grant's particular mix of Trotskyist tactics, and his lifetime was effectively wasted on an ultimately dishonest political cause.

This was a shame, because like Tony Cliff, Grant had much energy and some talent as a writer and speaker. He was an obsessive analyst of - and collector of information about - the capitalist economy, though arguably (because of his unsupported belief in capitalist collapse) his best works were not in this field. His political tract *Against the Theory of State Capitalism* in 1949, for instance, was a relentlessly logical attack on the irrationality of the Cliff (SWP) position from an orthodox Trotskyist perspective, implying that the only coherent state capitalist theory applied to the Soviet bloc, etc came from those, like the Socialist Party, who rejected Leninist and Trotskyist politics altogether. And in more recent times, he collaborated with Alan Woods to write an excellent book called *Reason and Revolt: Marxist Philosophy and Modern Science*, a history of science and scientific methods from a general Marxist standpoint. Grant will be remembered, above all else though, for founding a political tendency which hit the headlines and gained public notoriety but which otherwise did the socialist movement huge amounts of damage. His political heirs in *Socialist Appeal* and SPEW fittingly continue to peddle the same kind of elitist and outdated reformist nonsense now as Grant did when he first became a Trotskyist in the 1930s. Indeed, for years Grant was derided by many for sounding rather like an old, broken record - and today, his surviving political heirs most certainly stand out as badly scratched vinyl in what is a transparently digital age. ■

DAP

Cooking the Books (2)

"Mass unemployment"

The government's Welfare Reform Bill is currently going through Parliament. It provides for people on incapacity benefit and single mothers to be harassed to take some crap job or

have their benefit cut. New claimants are to be treated even more harshly. This is par for the course. Cutting back on welfare payments has been the policy of all governments, whether Labour or Tory, since the post-war boom came to an end in the 1970s.

The Green Paper which preceded the Bill, bearing the Orwellian title of "A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People To Work", sets out the problem as seen by the government:

"In the 1980s and 1990s the welfare state failed those who most needed its help, instead of combating mass unemployment, the welfare state alleviated its worst effects and diverted people onto other benefits. Instead of helping people into work, it locked them into long-term dependency. By 1997, there were almost 5.5 million people on benefits, 3 million more than in 1979. The number of people claiming unemployment benefits had risen by 50 per cent, while the number claiming lone parent and incapacity benefits had more than tripled."

This assumes that, if only they had tried, the (Tory) governments of the 1980s and 1990s could have combated "mass unemployment" by somehow creating new jobs as an alternative to paying unemployment and incapacity benefits. But governments can't create jobs at will.

The Green Paper says that total employment in Britain is now at a record high "having risen by 2.3 million since spring 1997" (when Labour took over). This is indeed what the statistics show but "employment" doesn't have the meaning which the unwary might assume of full-time employment. It includes part-time employment however short (even one day a week), the self-employed and family members who help them, and people on training courses.

The statisticians divide the population of working age (16-64 for men, 16-59 for women) into three groups: people in employment, the unemployed and the economically inactive. The latest figures, released by the Office for National Statistics on 12 July, show that in the three months to June there were 28.9 million (74.6 percent of working age population) in employment, 1.65 million (5.4 percent of economically active working age population) unemployed and 7.85 million (21.1 percent of working age population) inactive (see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=12>).

The government has set itself the aim of achieving "an employment rate equivalent to 80 percent of the working age popu-

lation". A look at the above figures shows that this would be the equivalent of reducing unemployment to zero. But this is not how the government aims to achieve this. Their plan is to reduce the number of economically inactive by at least 2.3 million:

"To achieve our aim, we will reduce by 1 million the number on incapacity benefit; help 300,000 lone parents into work; increase by 1 million the number of older workers."

This is all very well but where are the jobs to come from? The latest ONS figures give the number of job vacancies in the three months to June as just under 600,000. Gordon Brown believes that by encouraging "enterprise culture" the Labour government has created the conditions which have allowed businesses to expand and take on more workers and that, if it continues this, more jobs will be created.

What is more likely to happen is that the employment rate will go up a little (with a contribution from people going on government-funded training courses) but not to 80 percent. Instead, the unemployment rate will go up as a result of people on incapacity benefit being transferred to "job seekers allowance". The government won't be too displeased with this as they will have saved on welfare payments, since unemployment benefit is lower than incapacity benefit. But it will also, unintentionally, reveal that the "mass unemployment" of the 1980s and 1990s never really went away.

Political ideas in Africa

socialist consciousness. Indeed many, in their attempts to stay alive, finally abandon the political struggle altogether.

On the other hand, the very few who are fortunate enough to find well paid jobs tend to live ostentatious lifestyles obviously influenced by the type of negative western media output that is predominant here in Africa. A good lot of these people, with an imposed insatiable ambition to "make it", prove more injurious to left-wing politics than their poorer counterparts in the working class who cannot afford the luxury of discussing politics.

The media

As the dominant ideas of the day are but a reflection of the views of the ruling class so is the media replete with

information that is as poisonous as it is deceptive. On the one hand the television feeds viewers with adverts and news items which have the infectious intention of making ignorant people (and that means almost all Africa) think and harbour illusions of "making it". On the other hand the print media and the radio stations are mostly devoted to such topics as religion or race-based discussions. Thus, even when serious issues like poverty, hunger, war, etc are touched, they always treat them in the light of "god will work miracles" or "all African hands on deck". Such ill-fated notions as "Africa for Africans", "African lingua franca", "NEPAD is a winner" etc are all what is found in the media. Naturally, the ordinary people pick them up and continue the misguided debate. That is the part the media play in formulating opinions.

Obstacles

However, in spite of the poverty, hunger and ignorance, the working class could still have had elements within it who would interest themselves with real political issues like it happened between the sixties and the mid-eighties. Yet such a potential situation is hampered by other factors. Foremost among them is religion. Pushed to the wall by want, many ignorantly flock to religion as the last resort. Western big business, seeing the opportunity, quickly seizes it to its advantage. They worsen the already bad state of affairs by pumping money into the formation of more religious groups; the production of religious material; and the use of food, second-hand clothing, etc as incentives to the religious leaders and bait for the working class. Once captured it becomes an uphill task to salvage them or even let them see reason.

Another problem is the effectiveness of the capitalist propaganda machine. Their ideologues are always at hand to demonise socialism (citing the famous fall of the Berlin wall and the "collapse of communism") and eulogise the virtues of the free market economy. In fact today seminars, workshops, clinics, and other so-called sensitisation programmes are organised on a daily basis to entrap the poor and hungry people. The issues on the platform of which such meetings are held include HIV/AIDS, the emancipation of women, child abuse, etc. Participants are lavishly fed and at the end of the day paid a generous honorarium. Such programmes are mostly channelled through NGOs. This problem also has the dangerous side effect of getting people used to shunning meetings or groups where immediate financial gains are not available.

In conclusion, though the picture painted looks so gloomy, that does not mean there is no hope. There are several oases dotted around this desert of hopelessness. And especially now that some basic democratic rights seem to be getting the nod from the dictatorships here (for example the criminal libel law has been repealed in Ghana), we only need to keep up the struggle and to give courage to the already liberated. ■

SUHUYINI

A brief look at the history of left-wing ideas in Africa

In the years following independence from colonial rule, left-wing political thinking and activities were not uncommon especially in anglophone Africa. There were lots of vanguardist, anarchist and other pseudo-socialist organisations in many countries.

Some of such movements included the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards, Pan-African Youth Movement, United Revolutionary Front, New Democratic Movement, (Ghana); Movement for Justice in Africa (Sierra Leone, Gambia and Liberia); African National Congress, South African Communist Party, Pan Africanist Congress, etc (South Africa). These were all narrow-minded national pressure groups but whose left-wing leanings nevertheless provided forums where people learned of the existence of an alternative ideology - socialism. In fact that is how some of us later came to learn about and joined the World Socialist Movement.

However, around the mid-eighties the capitalists shot into a higher propaganda gear such as the newly independent countries never thought of. The free market and private sector idea came down so heavily that the leftist groupings were virtually swept off the political scene. Today only the South African ANC, SACP, PAC, etc are still around but they have all capitulated and metamorphosed into outright right-wing political parties. Even trade union activities have almost become non-existent now except of course on Mayday when pro-government sections of the working class come out to express their loyalty to the system.

This is the situation that accounts for the absence of even such anti-capitalist demonstrations as are staged in the West and other parts of the world each time representatives of big business hold their summits.

As for socialism (à la WSM), it is yet to be grasped by even the few who still see themselves as socialists here. Almost all of them understand socialism to mean the state capitalism of the soviet era.

Working class thinking

It is not surprising then that one can hardly talk of any positive working class thinking here in Africa. With the intensification of exploitation through a massive invasion of all sectors of the economy by capital, the economic situation of both urban and rural folk has drastically worsened. Under the dire circumstances, peasants drift to the towns with the hope of escaping from the hunger and lack of opportunities whilst the urban factory and office workers are preoccupied devising ways and means of pilfering at their workplaces in order to make ends meet. Consequently, many of these frustrated people find it difficult to engage in political activities thus reducing the chances of potential cadres deepening their

Desperate lies

The man who faced the choice of dropping dead while waiting on the NHS list or bluffing.

Early in August, a story broke about retired painter and decorator, Roy Thayers, having to lie in order to be free of terrible pain he'd been suffering for years, because of heart trouble.

A cardiac specialist warned the 77-year-old that he needed a life-saving operation as soon as possible, because he was in danger of having a fatal heart attack at any time. He was told the coronary angioplasty treatment he required would not be available from the NHS for nine months because of a waiting list, but added that by going private, Roy could have the operation within a week. Being penniless, Roy had the option of dropping dead while waiting on the NHS list or bluffing. He chose the latter, and said he'd pay, when he knew he couldn't.

He managed to stall requests for payment by hospital administrators, claiming he mislaid his chequebook. His operation took place quickly, he wrote out a "Mickey Mouse cheque" for the £8,500 cost the very next day, knowing he'd have to face the consequences later.

Speaking of his ploy, Roy said: "I love life, I love my dogs, I love fishing - why should I die for the sake of money?" Indeed, why should bits of paper decide who lives and who dies, or who eats and who starves, or who has a comfortable home and who has a stinking hovel, and so on? It's sick and idiotic. But seeing how, under capitalism, goods and services are provided to make profit - not meet needs - this system has created a universal comparison commodity (a.k.a. money) against which other commodities can be measured. Comprising paper notes, metal discs or mere digital data, this comparison commodity exists in order that those with something others need can make its supply dependent upon receiving a specified amount of this measuring tool. No money, no provision.

When Tony Blair developed a dicky ticker, naturally, he got treated very quickly. No long delay for the likes of him. Not forgetting that the Oxford Radcliffe NHS Trust, having provided the PM with his cardiac catheter ablation operation, shortly afterwards decided to deny this treatment to others in order to cut costs and meet the government's six-month waiting-list targets.

Of course, Roy hasn't managed to defeat capitalism by writing his rubber cheque. For a start, as he said himself, "I paid into the NHS for years to look after me, but the doctors were telling me they wouldn't, so who's robbing who?" Furthermore, the Primary Care Trust (PCT) in charge of the hospital that treated him was soon threatening to send in the bailiffs, and he eventually settled on repaying his debt at

£25 a week from his meagre pension.

No doubt, private health care enterprises will now do their utmost to ensure people have sufficient funds before they get treated in future. So although the money-loving *Sun* tabloid praised Roy for being "canny", and the profit-hungry *Mirror* said "well done", don't count on acquiring desperately needed medical care by the same method.

The fact is, no one should have to come up with devious methods to obtain critical health care or any other essential services and goods. In a decent and rational world these would be available according to need - not how much money people have depending on how much, or little, capitalism has allowed them to have in return for their exploitation and control by a minority ruling class.

The only reason this appalling and damaging situation continues is because we allow it. If all those unhappy and irate with the way they're made to live, work and struggle on pitiful pensions came together with the aim of getting rid of the system which allows a super-rich minority and their money mechanism to control, deprive and manipulate this majority, then capitalism would be in serious trouble.

Roy Thayers is also quoted as saying: "The real working classes of this country - the ones who have very little money - have been abandoned by their own government." From his own experience, Roy might well now accept that this government (and those before it) has never had the needs of the electorate as its priority. The main concern has always been looking after British capitalists, not the working class majority.

The answer isn't more money for the NHS - since in a competitive world, there'll always be pressure on all governments to keep cutting back on state funding, and increasingly make people pay directly for what they need. No. The answer is a society with *no money at all*. That's the only way to end the idiocy where, these days, NHS hospital employees are being told by PCTs to stop "overperforming" by providing treatment too quickly, because the government then financially penalises the Trusts for not adhering to minimum waiting times (as a result, one gynaecologist said he now spent more time doing sudoku puzzles than treating patients). And a moneyless society is also the only way to end the obscenity of driving people to desperate lies and deceit to obtain vital life-saving treatment that should be available to all - not just those sufficiently well off or powerful. ■

MAX HESS

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Book Reviews

Future humans

Glasshouse. By Charles Stross. Ace Hardcover. 2006. 352 pages. ISBN: 0441014038 (published in US)

If you go to the Science Museum in Kensington, up to the top floor, to the aviation gallery, you can discover a sign on the wall that informs us that the technology for flight has existed for hundreds of years, but that the obsession with flapping prevented any actual heavier than air flight until well towards the close of the nineteenth century.

This highlights the importance of exploring ideas and technological changes - and being bold and speculative. Contemporary science fiction performs much of that role today - dreaming up new technologies that seem impractical now but will soon become everyday. In a real sense, compared to the founders of our party, we are living in a science fiction world now - sadly it's a dystopia.

Charles Stross has recently been awarded a prize for his fiction by the transhumanist association (they hold that humans whilst they have evolved technologically are still the basic animals they were half a million years ago, but that soon the technology will exist to change our bodies and begin a new technology driven phase of biological evolution - the capacity to re-write our bodies). His book, *Glasshouse*, is an examination of the effects of technological change on our society - starting from the fact that within the last hundred years alone that human life has been fundamentally altered by technological innovation, and that the rate of change will increase dramatically within our lifetimes.

Set several hundred years from now, it features Robin, a historian who has wiped his memory agreeing to take part in an historical re-enactment of late twentieth century life as part of an experiment. He finds himself in the role of a woman, trapped both in her own biology and the social roles that come with that.

The participants in the experiment have to live in a panopticon - their every action potentially observed - with rules which they gain or lose points by following - and have to ensure that their 'team mates' (their local community) don't lose them points. It thus forms a useful device for examining the construction of social life and power. Some players - the score whores - unreflectively play the game as presented to them but Robin (renamed Reeve) tries to find ways of breaking out of the restrictive role given her by reading the rules sideways.

She cannot, however, escape the rules and the inertia of the score whores; and she has to stand by and witness the horrors of the rules of the game which she objects to but cannot escape from. As such it is an acute depiction of dissidence in society.

The book is thus both an examination of social power and the power of ideas, as well as a meditation on the importance of memory and history for understanding where we are and where we are going. A flight of fancy that depicts the present in a deeply realistic way.

PIK SMEET

Western vanguardist

A Rebel's Guide to Gramsci. By Chris Bambery, Bookmarks, 2006. 60 pages. £3.

This is a short introduction, from an SWP viewpoint, to the life and ideas of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Communist Party leader who died from natural causes in a fascist prison in 1937. Gramsci appeals to the SWP and Western Leninists generally because of his more sophisticated version of vanguardism than Lenin's.

In his *Prison Notebooks* he distinguished the situation in Tsarist Russia and some other parts of Eastern Europe from that in the West. In Tsarist Russia, he argued,



Gramsci

the state was everything and the ruling class relied directly on repression to maintain itself in power; in this situation the task of revolutionaries was (in Bambery's summary of Gramsci's views) "to lead

a direct assault on power when the opportunity arose", as the Bolsheviks had successfully done in Russia (only to install themselves, we would add, as the embryo of a new ruling class)..

In Western Europe, on the other hand, the ruling class ruled mainly through the "hegemony" it exercised over the working class rather than through direct force. In Bambery's words again:

"In Western Europe . . . the ruling class rested mainly on consent and was able to rely on a variety of institutions within civil society which organised and reinforced this. Gramsci described these as acting like a complicated series of earthworks surrounding a great fortress - the state. So institutions like the church, the media, the education system and political parties helped secure the consent of the masses allowing force to be used sparingly and only in the last resort . . . So these networks of support for the ruling class and the ideas they helped to reinforce had to be undermined first through a long ideological struggle before a direct assault on the ruling class was possible . . . Communists had to set themselves the task of undermining the consent, however grudgingly given, which allowed capitalism to rule."

This is an analysis we can accept and indeed had made ourselves. But the conclusion Gramsci drew from it was not the same as ours. We concluded that, as socialism too could only exist with the consent of the working class, the task of socialists was to directly, incessantly and exclusively campaign amongst fellow workers against capitalism and capitalist ideas and for socialism. Gramsci concluded that a vanguard party should seek to establish its own "hegemony" over the working class, by assuming the leadership of the workers' day-to-day struggles.

ALB

Theatre Review

Coriolanus at the Globe

This play features the citizens of Rome, as was customary for Shakespeare, as a fickle and foolish lot, shifting wind under the power of the words of their rulers and betters. The performance of it at the Globe leads to the intriguing twist of bringing the action into the audience (most of whom stand as a crowd before the stage for three hours or more).

We were thus cast as part of the mob, the mob despised by the title character - Gaius Marcius (given, during the play, the name Coriolanus for his part in the capture of the city of Corioli). As Coriolanus ranted how he hated the mob, he moved within the audience, speaking to placed actors in period costumes. The sentiments towards the mob must have jarred with the generally democratic instincts of the modern population.

The play centres on his being appointed Consul (leader) of Rome, and being compelled by the plebeians to gain their votes - for which he must plead and show his war wounds. He believes that consulship is his by right, and resents asking the scum for their voices.

The action then focuses on what is essentially a revolution. The play began with the people in revolt for more bread - which won them tribunes - a representation in government. The tribunes then organise to bring down Coriolanus - as a fierce opponent of democracy.

This leads to him being banished - only to return at the head of a rival powers' army - much to the consternation of the revolutionary tribunes. Eventually, he is persuaded by the entreaties of his wife and mother not to wage war on Rome, and he returns with his army to be murdered as a traitor to the rival power.

Coriolanus himself is presented as a utopian idealist. He fights for glory, reveling in war. He actively refuses a share of the spoils, claiming only glory motivates him. At war with the world, he wants to be 'the author of himself', without any bonds trying him, living only for his glorious legend. His defeat is organised by more worldly Machiavellian politicians.

This raging anti-democrat still manages to hold our sympathies because of his idealism and his proven abilities. He stands as the ultimate individualist - who scowls like a schoolboy when chided to behave by his mother.

The play is littered with corporeal imagery - the state is a body with hands, feet and head. The common people are reduced to mere voices, as airy as Coriolanus' own glory. It is this sense of powerlessness and insubstantiability that being in the crowd conveys. Audience members could easily recognise the regret of the crowd in making Coriolanus' the consul for much the same way that most modern politicians - like Tony Blair - are appointed to disappoint by our simple voices.

PIK SMEET

SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX

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letters continued

need to be active as well as appreciated by others.

3. Since over 90 percent of crimes today are crimes against property and since property and poverty will disappear in socialist society where everybody will automatically be able to satisfy their material needs, the main "crimes" that would remain would be such things as breaking traffic regulations or hosepipe bans. But by "serious criminals" we assume you mean people who kill or harm other people. Any such behaviour is likely to be highly exceptional but, should it occur, the person responsible would have to be stopped and, if need be, detained. We are not sure that "punishment" is the right word since most such instances are likely to be medical cases.

4. Yes, of course the "creative arts" are a necessary part of any society, but in socialism won't be confined to such things as opera and poetry. We go along with William Morris in saying that the everyday work of pro-

Meetings

East Anglia

Saturday 23 September, 12 noon to 4pm
12 noon: Informal chat.
1pm: Meal.
2pm to 4pm: Discussion.

The Conservatory, back room of
Rosary Tavern, Rosary Rd, Norwich.

ducing something useful can also be creative and art. And we would imagine that most people will want to take advantage of the possibility socialist society will offer them of being able to do a variety of jobs (even in the same week) rather than being tied to the same job, day after day, year after year - *Editors*.

Manchester

Monday 25 September, 8.15 p.m.

'WHY SOCIALISTS OPPOSE THE LABOUR PARTY'

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre
(This meeting will take place during the Labour Party Conference in Manchester, and Labour Party members and others are invited to attend)

Chiswick

Tuesday 19 September 8pm

FREE SOFTWARE: DOT.COMMUNISM?

Speaker: Tristan Miller
Committee Room, CHiswick Town Hall,
Heathfield Terrace, W4.
(nearest tube: Chiswick Park)

What is Behind the Fight for Suez



The men at the top see more clearly the economic issues and interests involved but as they need to rouse the emotions and win the support of the mass of the people they dress up most of the declarations in the rabble-rousing language likely to move their listeners and readers. So over Suez we have had from the Western politicians a spate of talk about law and illegality, international rights, and wrongs, Fascist acts of plunder, etc., while from the Middle East Nasser and his defenders have worked up themselves and their audiences with passionate speeches about imperialism, oppression, insults to dignity, sovereignty and nationhood (...).

To the Socialist the world is not capable of being divided into the good and the bad statesman and the good and bad nations; they are all Capitalist and all are impelled by the nature of the social system to struggle for markets for their products, for sources of cheap raw materials, and for control of trade routes like Suez and strategic points like Cyprus. These are the things for which they fight, no matter what the fine phrases and slogans in which their aims and motives are garbed.

The crux of the Suez dispute is firstly the oil that exists in abundance in the countries of the Middle East, and secondly the Canal through which much of it, as well as other cargoes, is transported. Oil is now an indispen-

sable fuel for the motors and tractors, aeroplanes and warships, merchant vessels and factories of the countries of the world. With coal production and hydro-electric power failing to keep up with rapidly growing demand for fuel and with atomic power only a development of the not very near future, all, countries need oil and many of them, including Britain, have practically none within their own frontiers (...).

At the time of writing the discussions between the Powers have not produced a settlement though the evident lack of war-fever among British workers and the disinclination of other Governments to back up Britain and France in forcible action against Egypt have had some effect in restraining the Eden Government and its supporters.

On the other hand Arab workers, misled by the belief that nationalisation of the Canal Co. (and eventual nationalisation of the oil industry) is in their interest, have been vigorously backing their governments.

This is the real tragedy of the Suez dispute, that there is no unity among the workers of the different countries in opposing the war-talk of their Governments.

(From front page article, *Socialist Standard*, September 1956)



British troops in Port Said

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the

consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class

will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the

working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Peter Hain - a case of mistaken identity

With things as they are anyone wanting to lead the Labour Party must be driven by such pronounced tendencies to self-harm as to classify them as, if not certifiably mad, then clearly unsafe to be let out by themselves at night. So what can be said about anyone whose ambitions run, not to the leadership, but to election as Deputy Leader? How can we take seriously anyone who is willing to work so hard to get a job with so bitter a history of crushed ambitions? A job held by the likes of Morrison, Brown, Healey, Hattersley, Prescott? Well there is reason to think that politicians can survive only through a stubborn ability to distort reality, which would explain why even now, with the Labour Party in such disarray, there is no lack of candidates eager to take over as second-in-command of the party's ragged army when, eventually, Blair steps down and presumably takes his Deputy Prescott with him.

Among this hopeful, if hopeful, assembly is Peter Hain who, taking the long view, has busily fertilised his campaign with support among the party grass roots and the trades unions. There have been a variety of descriptions of Hain. In his book *The Rise of Political Lying* Peter Osborne exempts him, with some other Labour ministers, from "...lying or deceiving the public in a serious way". However a blogger on 11



Could anyone be more irritating than Blunkett?

July, who may be closer to public opinion, referring to his policy on Northern Ireland devolution, described him as "a duplicitous tosser". David Blunkett thought that "If there's anyone who upsets colleagues more than I do it's Peter (Hain)" - a characteristic which in August seemed to extend beyond Hain's colleagues when he fell asleep during an interview with a man who had come to see him about the investigation of his son's murder in Northern Ireland. Hain

upset Robert Mugabe - whom he once supported in the struggle against white minority rule in Zimbabwe - by backing the white farmers in that country. But of course all of this is common currency among politicians; what may recommend Hain to the voters is his presentation, in the words of Andrew Rawnsley (*Servants of the People*) as "Curly headed and perma-tanned, the former anti-apartheid activist ... a member of the soft left trusted by Number 10".

Robbery

So is it to be another case of mistaken identity, of the voters misreading a politician's future intentions through disregarding their past? Hain is no stranger to identity problems. In 1976 he was on trial for the attempted robbery of a bank near his home in Putney. The prosecution case was that Hain had gone into the bank, snatched £490 and ran off, chased through the local streets but got away. The bank cashier involved in the snatch identified Hain, if with some reservations. In any case Hain had some convincing alibi evidence, which persuaded the jury that he was not the robber. It was suspected that the case had been an attempted frame-up by the South African security services, in reprisal for Hain's stand against the apartheid laws. (A few years before the robbery he was sent a letter bomb).

Hain was born in Kenya but brought up in South Africa where his parents were active campaigners against apartheid; he grew up accustomed to his home being raided by the police and to a system which legally banned his parents from speaking to each other. The family came to London, to continue their campaign; Hain was the leading light in the protests aimed at stopping the England cricket team touring South Africa and to disrupt the Springbok Rugby tour to England (the pitch invasions by shaggy youths certainly upset the boozy blazers and duffle coats in the stands at Twickenham). For a time he was in the Young Liberals - who were then rated as more "radical" than Labour - and was elected their president before he switched to the Labour Party, in which his career has been more notable for conformity than for disruptive protest.

In Government

Hain was elected in 1991 as MP for Neath, in South Wales - one of those constituencies where Tories have been something of an endangered species. His majority climbed to over 30,000 in the heady days of Labour's 1997 triumph; since then it has steadily fallen with the Blair government's decline in popularity but he still holds more than half the votes cast. He is Secretary of State for Wales as well as for Northern Ireland and has held other jobs such as Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the Commons. So he has been firmly in position to live up to the promise of his early days as a determined, principled "radical" who would justify the expectations of his admirers. And now, how has it turned out? Has it been a case of mistaken identity, has Hain been wrongly assessed as someone he is not? Or is he guilty of gross deception?

As an opposition back benchers he showed that his talent for being disruptive had not deserted him when, as the Major government was approaching its final days in power, he tried to unseat some Tory MPs by getting them declared bankrupt after losing money as underwriters at Lloyds, which would have forced them to resign their seats. The government had just lost two for-

merly rock solid seats at Christchurch and Newbury and they were understandably nervous about the prospect of having to face any more by-elections. The Speaker obstructed Hain's scheme but the details of individual losses were published in the *Independent*. One of the MPs was Edward Heath, who furiously denounced Hain for his "...sleazy desire to get Tories out". Hain also managed to upset the Labour Party in Blaenau Gwent, a seat once held by Aneurin Bevan and Michael Foot. The Welsh Assembly Member there, Peter Law, was keen to be the next MP for Blaenau Gwent but the party insisted that the Labour candidate would be selected - foisted on the local party - from an all-female list, which he opposed. So he persisted in standing as an Independent. In an attempt to get round this awkward situation Law was offered a peerage in return for not standing - according to reliable evidence, Peter Hain was the person who did this particular piece of dirty work. In the event Law defeated the official Labour candidate; he died earlier this year and at the by-elections in June his wife stood for the Assembly and his agent for Westminster. Both won, again as Independents. (Not surprisingly, in spite of the evidence, Hain has always denied having been involved).

Iraq

But Hain's betrayal of his reputation has extended far beyond Wales. During his time he has been a strong supporter of the government on many issues which at one time, consistent with his record, he should have opposed. He has been a strong supporter of ID cards which, according to the government, are essential to prevent suicide bombers blowing up aircraft or tube trains. There is little evidence to support this but what is known is that the cards will be useful in chipping away what civil liberties are available to us. He was firmly in favour of those same student top-up fees which Tony Blair trumpeted as vital in the struggle to make the very best in education available to everyone, rich and poor but which will in fact lead to workers emerging from university under an enormous burden of debt. And of course he has been an ardent supporter of the war in Iraq, which was justified on the grounds that it would usher a parliamentary democracy into that ravaged country but which has resulted in a chaos of strife and slaughter, all in the cause of American capitalism taking a grip on that vital area. And Hain has justified this abominable attitude with typically sickening Blairite verbiage: "Sunday will be a historic day for Iraq, and the extent of Iraqi participation in the elections is enormous, with 8,000 candidates, 150,000 officials and thousands of polling stations" (27 January 2005) and later "The future of Iraq is about building democracy and not succumbing to terrorism..." (17 March 2005).

Perhaps Hain will become the next Deputy Leader of the Labour Party or even, against precedent, the party Leader and Prime Minister. If any of this happens we shall be subjected to the customary drivel about a different, radical way of organising this segment of the capitalist system. This may impress the voters for a while, as it did with Blair, until capitalism itself unmasks it and there will be no more mistaken identity.

IVAN



Blinded By Capitalism

The following news item appeared in the *Guardian* (17 June): "Drug firm blocks cheap blindness cure. Company will only seek licence for medicine that costs 100 times more. A major drug company is blocking access to a medicine that is cheaply and effectively saving thousands of people from going blind because it wants to launch a more expensive product on the market." People with wet macular degeneration, a common condition among the elderly, have previously been treated with Avastin, which prevents impaired eyesight and blindness. The manufacturer Genetech have not presented it to the National Institute for Clinical Excellence because they are putting Lucentis forward instead. This treatment costs 100 times more. This is good business practice but bad news for the elderly workers suffering from the condition.



Genetech - robbing you blind

Conned By Capitalism

An example of how capitalism threatens lives is given in the *Guardian* (26 June): "Drug companies are accused today of endangering public health through widescale marketing malpractices, ranging from covertly attempting to persuade consumers that they are ill to bribing doctors and misrepresenting the results of safety and efficacy tests on their products. In a report that charts the scale of illicit practices by drug companies in the UK and across Europe, Consumers International - the world federation of consumer organisations - says people are not being given facts about the medicines they take because the companies hide the market-

ing tactics on which they spend billions."

Kicked By Capitalism

Sport according to most dictionaries is a "pleasant pastime; amusement or diversion", but inside modern capitalism it is no such thing. It has become, as most other human endeavours have become - a ruthless competitive business. In the business pages of the *Observer* (16 July) we learn that Leeds United borrowed over 25 years' future earnings, were relegated and had to sell all their good players; we also learn that Leicester City borrowed on future earnings to the extent of £26 million, and by the way they were relegated too. So while supporters on the terraces sing their songs of devotion and undying support the banks, investors and other money lenders count their gains.

Disgusted By Capitalism

In a world where 8 million kids die every year through lack of clean water and sanitation the following news item disgusts us, how about you? "Forget

the salt and lime, you'll need a mint to enjoy this tequila.

Producer Tequila Ley.925 announced Saturday that it had sold a bottle of Mexico's best-known beverage in a gold and platinum

casing for a whopping \$225,000. This is a really unique bottle of tequila and our client, a US based collector of fine wines and spirits, will treasure this prize to add to an already impressive collection" (*Associated Press*, 23 July).

Abandoned By Capitalism

President Nixon's praise for the US moonlanders was a cynical vote-catching ploy as can be seen by the following press report. "America was so eager to beat the Soviet Union to the moon it launched its

1969 mission before it was ready, a documentary claims. The documentary reveals that the crew had to use a pen to fix a broken switch on their lunar module to return to earth, the *Daily Mirror* reports. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin had accidentally snapped off a circuit breaker switch. According to *Apollo 11: The Untold Story*, US president Richard Nixon prepared an address announcing the deaths of Armstrong, Aldrin and Michael Collins. The US ordered NASA to cut links with the astronauts if disaster was imminent, not wanting the world to see images of astronauts spinning off into space" (*Herald Sun*, 25 July).



Shunned By Capitalism

"Las Vegas councillors have made it illegal to give food to homeless people. In an effort to curb charity that is said to be hav-

ing unintended consequences, the city council has decided to ban food hand-outs to the homeless. The law targets so-called mobile soup kitchens. It carries a maximum penalty of a \$500 fine and six



months in jail." (*New York Times*, July 31). It is all so logical, isn't it? You are trying to con workers into the fantasy that capitalism is a wonderful society and that they can become capitalists too, when some poor worker in Las Vegas tries to ask for something to eat. Solution? Ban the soup kitchen.



Free Lunch



by Rigg

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Journal of The Socialist Party - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

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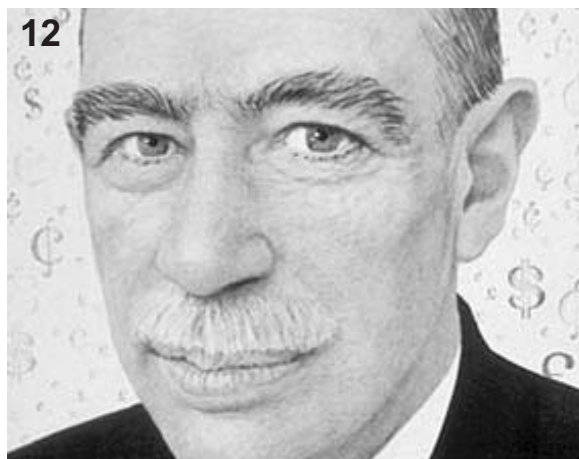
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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 4 November** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.

TEL: 020 7622 3811

E-MAIL: spgb@worldsocialism.org

Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial

Leaders, get lost!

Countless column inches and seemingly endless hours of news reports have been given over to the leadership crisis the Labour Party is currently engulfed in. Speaking up for Prime Minister Tony Blair, former Home Secretary Charles Clark said Blair would stand down when he was good and ready to do so and he accused Chancellor Gordon Brown of "absolutely stupid" behaviour in challenging Blair, commenting that Brown needed first to prove his fitness to lead.

Fitness to lead? Now there's a thing. It assumes leaders have some special qualification acquired over years of study and self-sacrifice when the only real qualification is the ability to hoodwink others into thinking you possess knowledge and qualities they do not. Unlike other professions - doctors, surgeons, architects, physicists - whose skills come via many years of hard slog - politicians require none whatsoever. The only requisite credentials needed when standing for election are that you are over 21 years of age, not insane and with no recent prison record.

Despite this, many workers think we cannot function without leaders. This is a fallacy and one perpetuated by the ruling class to help them maintain their control over our lives. Indeed, so prevalent is this philosophy, that from the cradle to the grave we are taught to mistrust our own intelligence and to feel somewhat inadequate, to look up to our 'betters and superiors' (schools, church, politicians, parents etc) for their expert guidance and to accept without question the plans they draw up for our future.

It is assumed by many that leaders run the world. Well, we think it is we, the workers, who run the world. Politicians

might make government policy, which becomes law, but it is we who build and work the hospitals and schools. It is we who build the bridges, roads and railways, ports and airports; all the products that humans need to survive. It is we who produce everything from a pin to an oil-rig and provide humanity with all the services it requires - we the working class! We don't depend on leaders for these skills or for their guidance. They have no monopoly on our knowledge and intelligence or on the inventions we dream up to enhance the quality of life. If all the worlds' leaders died tomorrow, few would really miss them and society would function just as before.

The concept of leadership has emerged with class society and will end when we abolish class society, when we abolish the profit system and all that goes with it. The master class have been allowed to lead because of their control over the means of living and by virtue of their control of the education system and their monopoly of the media and other information processes.

It doesn't have to be this way. The greatest weapons we possess are our class unity, our intelligence, and our ability to question the status quo and to imagine a world fashioned in our own interests. Leaders perceive all of this to be a threat and so will do anything to keep us in a state of oblivion, dejection and dependency. Our apathy is the victory they celebrate each day. Our unwillingness to unite as a globally exploited majority and to confront them on the battlefield of ideas is the subject of their champagne toasts.

Remember this as the battle for leadership of the Labour Party heats up.

Carbon trading or social change?

July brought two publications coincidentally including articles on the same subject. Couched in terms so, so soothing to the save-the-planet-sympathisers, *Roughnews* advises us that "we all need to limit our personal impact on global warming" and whilst supporting responsible tourism we should give thought to "how we can redress the environmental damage caused by travel - in particular flights, the fastest growing contributor to global warming". Great! Excellent idea! This has to be good news. We can continue to fly, as often, as far as we choose and can also redress the environmental damage. And the solution? Offset your use of carbon taken from the ground by enabling a tree to be planted somewhere in the world - and on a short haul flight this "costs no more than the price of a drink".

Rough Guides is also publishing a book in October, called *Climate Change* which, miracle of miracles, is actually a 'climate neutral' book meaning that "the amount of CO2 emitted in the book's production and distribution, including everything from paper manufacture to the computers used by the author and editor and the estimated carbon footprint of the book's physical distribution has been calculated" by the carbon offset company Climate Care. To what end? So that Rough Guides (through increased retail price of the book, presumably) will pay Climate Care to 'offset' the carbon emissions by planting some trees somewhere, or by installing energy-saving light bulbs somewhere else, or a similar scheme supposed to mop up the carbon released. Apparently Rough Guides offsets all its authors' travel by paying Climate Care to take care of it.

No mention of how Climate Care benefits from the arrangement. It seems one can 'offset' all manner of nasties now, from flying, car rental, to producing CDs, all the while feeling good about 'putting something back' and being lulled into believing you have repaired the damage done. (The World Bank estimated the global carbon market to be worth \$11 billion at the end of 2005, 10 times the previous year's value.)

However, the second July publication, *New Internationalist*, has a different story to tell. It reminds us that by unlocking the carbon in fossil fuels by mining it, burning it and releasing it as active carbon it disrupts the balance of carbon in air, soil and seas. What is needed to address the problem of too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is to reduce the amount of carbon released. Oliver Rackham, a Cambridge University botanist and landscape historian is quoted thus, "Telling people to plant trees (to solve climate change) is like telling them to drink more water to keep down rising sea levels." Adam Ma'anit, the author of the article, gets to grips with reality and shows offsetting for what it is - companies being formed to take advantage of the gullible consumer, established companies jumping on the bandwagon to increase their share of the market and the misinformed punter alleviating their guilt whilst doing nothing to actually cut carbon emissions. Adam Ma'anit: "Climate change is an issue we shouldn't be 'neutral' on. Carbon offsets are at best a distraction and at worst a grandiose carbon laundering scheme." And, "The solution to climate change is social change." Any seconders?

J.S.



High & Dry

Water World 1

"We were just standing around in our shorts, stunned and amazed, trying to make sense of it". Thus spoke one Inuit villager, on describing winter temperatures of 9°C that should have been -30°C (*Independent on Sunday*, 27 August). As the Arctic warms up twice as fast as the rest of the world, and sea ice has shrunk in area by a quarter and in thickness by a half, its inhabitants are discovering that their igloos are heat traps, their water supply needs wells and their workplaces need air-conditioning. Meanwhile Greenland farmers - for they do exist - are starting to grow broccoli, cauliflower and Chinese cabbage, while having to make up, among their thousand words for reindeer, some new words for the salmon which are appearing in their rivers, and the barn owls, hornets and robins which are now adventuring to the far north. What the Inuit think of global warming can be surmised by the number of their houses and snowmobiles that have started falling through the ice, and one can easily see why they think "the world is slowly disintegrating." Meanwhile in Siberia, roads and buildings built on the permafrost are starting to collapse, and the Permafrost

to do by the end of 2100 at this rate, global sea levels would rise by 6.5m (21 feet) (*BBC Online*, 11 August). If this happens, New York, New Orleans and half of Florida including Miami, Tampa and Fort Lauderdale will be underwater.

Not surprisingly perhaps, Washington is facing rebellion from state governors all over the country to stop stalling over Kyoto and do something, not least because their own oil and gas companies are already one jump ahead with 'greener' technology and need the relevant legislation to be enacted so they can capitalize on it. Leading the way is Da Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who when not terminating crooks by state execution is so keen to display his green credentials he sided with the Democrats against his own party in order to pass the Global Warming Solutions Act, which aims to cap emissions in California, the world's 12th largest CO2 emitter, by 25 percent by 2020 (*BBC Online*, 1 September). But even Arnie is unlikely to hold back the Arctic flood, because capitalism just doesn't sit down and listen to reason, as his Republican ex-buddies know perfectly well. The reason they opposed his cosy Californian carbon-capping

cap was because they knew perfectly well that unless such a plan was federal, so

Institute in Yakutsk has recently suffered a major flood (*BBC Online*, 12 September).

Greenland is the second biggest ice mass after Antarctica, with glaciers as large as Manhattan and as high as the Empire State Building, and it is now melting at a rate that has alarmed even the alarmists. Evidence from NASA satellites and ground-based researchers concluded in February 2006 that Greenland's glaciers are melting twice as fast as they were five years ago. If the ice cap were to completely disappear, which it is quite likely

that nobody could get out of it, all the investment would leak out of the state into neighbouring ones which were not required under their state law to worry so energetically about the problem.

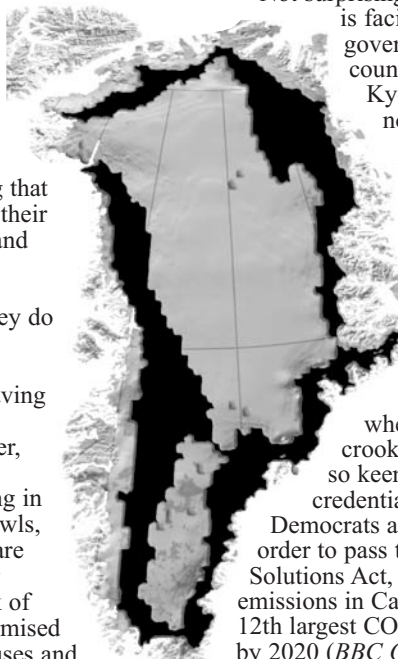
Water World 2

While the Inuit are fast running out of ice, a third of the world's population are faced with a shortage of any water at all. The situation has arisen twenty years earlier than projections forecasted, according to a report by the International Water Management Institute in Colombo, Sri Lanka (*New Scientist*, 26 August). The report states that while in some places physical shortage of water is to blame, in others it is a question of lack of financial investment. So are they talking billion-dollar pipelines from the water sources to the dry interiors in Africa, Asia and parts of China? Not a bit. The state-of-the-art technology is, wait for it, plastic buckets and bags, lots of big ones, to catch the stuff as it falls out of the sky. Storing roof and road run-off, they argue, could double or triple food production in sub-Saharan Africa and south-east Asia. Not only that, but saving water for 'unrainy days' in this way could slow the expansion of rain-fed agriculture into virgin habitats from 60 per cent by 2050 down to 10 per cent.

The predictable response of most people reading this would be a Homer Simpson-like 'Duh'. You don't need to be an engineering genius to figure out that water butts are a good way of saving water, so why in hell aren't they doing it already, you cannot resist asking? Presumably because in the capitalist scheme of things, poor Africans, Indians and Chinese peasants don't have the price and don't rate the price even of a plastic bucket.

Water World 3

Socialists always welcome any sincere attempt to solve the world's problems, even if some of these attempts are inevitably misguided. One doesn't in all honesty expect a great contribution to be made by new-age mystics so it is no surprise that when Madonna and husband Guy Ritchie approached the UK government with a scheme to clean up nuclear waste, using a deeply mystical Kabbalah water which they claimed had received extensive testing in a Ukrainian lake, the government didn't show much interest in the Ritchies' esoteric knowledge of Jewish mystical liquids and in fact showed them the door (*New Scientist*, 26 August). One might expect however that the government official who recounted this story would show the appropriate respect for such eminent celebrities, or at least a cool and precise scientific detachment. Instead, the official described the encounter as follows: "It was like a crank call.... The scientific mechanisms and principles were just bollocks." Lovely to see scientists descend to plain English occasionally.



2004
Greenland
ice melt
shown in
black

Ted Grant

Dear Editors

Following on from your obituary of Ted Grant, the Trotskyist founder of the "entryist" Militant Tendency (September *Socialist Standard*), I agree that he was never a revolutionary; but just another reformer masquerading as a revolutionary.

I first heard Ted Grant speak at a meeting in High Holborn, of the so-called Revolutionary Communist Party, just before its demise probably in 1947. At this meeting, I heard for the first time the claim that the Soviet Union was not socialist, or even a "degenerated workers' state", but in fact a dictatorial form of state capitalism. A member of the audience (of about 100) got up and forcefully, as well as persistently, much to the annoyance of Grant and the other Trotskyist speakers, and argued that the economy of the USSR was state capitalist, and that the workers and peasants there were exploited in much the same way as elsewhere. Shortly after, two of the leaders who were at the meeting, Jock Haston and Tony Cliff, both accepted the claim that Soviet Russia was state capitalist.

And who was the speaker from the audience? I learned later, when I knew the SPGB (from meetings on Clapham Common), that it was a man named Sammy Cash, a well-known and active member of the Socialist Party.

As you noted, Ted Grant was ousted from the Militant Tendency by a man called Peter Taaffe, a thoroughly dishonest individual who claims that his existing group is the "socialist party", known by the most appropriate acronym of SPEW.

PETER E. NEWELL, Colchester, Essex

Dear Editors,

The obituary on Ted Grant by DAP rather impressed me with its honesty and, even, generosity. I met Grant and Haston in 1948 at the RCP HQ on the Harrow Road. Haston was a fun fellow; Grant seemed a bit like a frustrated priest.

RICHARD MONTAGUE, Ballymena, Co. Antrim.

Royalty - an irrelevance?

Dear Editors,

On the road to Socialism there are powerful institutions in the way. Monarchy, with all its associated inequalities and public loyalty, is a powerful support for capitalism. It embodies wealth and privilege alongside emotional adoration by the poor. Cromwell managed to remove a king, but soon after his death the monarchy was re-established.

Why has it been as successful as an institution? It no doubt has its own methods for self-survival (modern PR experts, and years of experience of being a monarch, plus perhaps a genuine love for the British people). Yet the institution can only survive with public consent. None of the political parties that have attained power has bothered to question in any serious way the existence of the monarchy; partly I assume because they dread the loyalty of the British people.

We have all been socialised into a culture that respects the royal family, at least in principle (people may frown at certain incidents with the royals, but basically accept their existence). Submission to the monarchy is encouraged from the cradle to the grave, and even if cynical, a person may find it

difficult to resist a feeling of pride when a member of the royal family visits their factory or local area. Celebrities have occasionally returned MBEs, but they are few and far between.

Vast arguments are put forward to justify the royal family (e.g. encourages tourism and hence the pockets of the people) We are 'immersed' in royalist propaganda and culture. Yet how can it be right for one family to be so well provided for (houses, land, wealth, public adoration etc) when other families struggle from day to day?

They also assist and legitimise other people who have unfair amounts of wealth (in the past kings and queens have helped each other in difficult circumstances - when the peasants are getting above themselves for instance).

The institution also puts unfair pressure on the members of the royal family. The horses the Queen must have sat on horses on rainy days to fulfil her royal duties; and the boredom of watching parade after parade! The lack of privacy - even minor scandals blown out of all proportion, and the difficulty of moving in privacy from A to B.

We are so 'brainwashed' into the advantages of monarchy, that we grossly underestimate the disadvantages. Yet it takes courage for a politician to suggest to suggest we abolish it - the inaction of millions of indoctrinated people can be a formidable thing to experience. Other politicians would condemn his very words (in the hope of gaining votes for their own parties!).

Are we all involved in a 'mother-figure' complex (or for ex-public school types - 'matron')? Do we feel more comfortable knowing she is then looking after us? Or are we being childish? Shouldn't we liberate her

continued on page 18

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UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

Central London branch. 2nd Tuesday and 4th Monday, 7.30pm. Carpenters Arms, Seymour Place, W1 (near Marble Arch). Corres: Head Office, 52 Clapham High St. SW4 7UN Tel: **020 622 3811**

Enfield and Haringey branch. Tues. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL. email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Mon. 7.45pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: **020 7622 3811**

West London branch. 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

Pimlico. C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge Street, SW1 4VQ. Tel: **020 7834 8186**

MIDLANDS

Birmingham branch. Thur. 8pm. The Square Peg, Corporation Street. Tel: Ron Cook, **0121 553 1712**

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Edinburgh branch. 1st Thur. 8-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

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Branch website:

http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/

Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: **0141 5794109** Email: richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

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West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: **01506 462359**

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Swansea branch. 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. Tel: **01792 643624**

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OVERSEAS

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Socialist Party of Canada/Parti

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Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada. Email: SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand. Email: wspnz@worldsocialism.org

World Socialist Party of the United

States P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA

02144 USA. Email: wspboston@mindspring.com

Left, Right and Centre

As the Party Conference season begins we look at politicians' politics.

Today politics is about achieving political power, with the main political parties contesting to maximise their share of votes in a political market in the same way as competing companies do in their areas of commercial interest. Power and influence has become an end in itself for political parties because those interests that traditionally separated them have been absorbed into the tapestry of modern capitalism. In Britain, for example, the Conservative and Unionist Party evolved out of the Tory interest which was committed to the landed aristocracy, the upper class, and those institutions like the church that promoted the concept of the 'divine right of kings' and the social stratification of society.

As the middle class - the bourgeoisie

or capitalist class - evolved and gained strength economically, it challenged the aristocracy for political control in order to throw off the impeding legal structures of feudalism which confined and restricted its continued economic expansion. The political interest representing the burgeoning class interests of the bourgeoisie was known as the Whigs and subsequently evolved into the Liberal Party.

In a property-orientated society such as feudalism or capitalism all real wealth is produced and can only be produced by the labour power of a subject class. The patents granting ownership of land to the feudal lords and barons may have derived from a parasitic monarchy but the wealth and privilege enjoyed by the lords and ladies of the manor was founded on the

labour of their feudal serfs.

Similarly, the new revolutionary class of capitalists needed the labourer to work their engines of production; the serf would be converted from a feudal slave into a wage slave under the illusion that they were being given their freedom. Obviously, since the labourer was the key element in the wealth-producing function of both the feudal establishment and the new capitalist system of social organisation, the terms governing the future control of labour were a primary element of contention between the old order and that of the nascent capitalist class. This conflict of interest between the landed interest and the interests of the bourgeoisie was reflected in the post-revolutionary world of capitalist politics.



“the left’ have traditionally supported the main Labour or social-democratic parties in general elections only to become opposed to their policies when they formed governments”

Left and right

The terms 'Left' and 'Right' as political designations emerged innocuously out of the seating arrangements in the Legislative Assembly of Revolutionary France in 1791, when the royalist Feuillants sat on the right side of the chamber and the radical Montagnards occupied the seats on the left. This almost incidental occurrence was to bring the terms 'left' and 'right' into the lexicon of politics, where inevitably their wide generality would make them universally both an instrument of confusion and often a means of deliberate obfuscation.

By the middle of the 19th century the expression of political conservatism was regarded as 'right wing' while their liberal opponents were designated 'left wing'. It was not solely, however as labels for political parties that the terms were to bedevil political consciousness but increasingly the most irrelevant matters that could be construed as having political moment found description within the spectrum of Left and Right.

So when the German and French socialist movements tactically retained programmes of 'immediate demands' - reformist strategies intended to bring about what they hoped would be the piecemeal evolution of capitalism into socialism - they inevitably became the political Left. The British Labour Party when it was formed in 1906, unlike its continental cousins, did not choose reformism as a tactic but was founded on a strategy that held that inevitably and gradually capitalism could be reformed into socialism. It became the principal focus of the Left in Britain, lingering long after the Labour Party's pathetic failure to exercise any real influence in government when it first got the opportunity to do so in 1923.

Inter-Left enmity

For decades Labour and Social Democratic parties throughout the world have contended for political office and the power of government on the claim that they were acting as bona-fide socialists. The multiplicity of left-wing groups, 'tendencies' and parties, like the various Trotskyist organisations and the fragmented periphery of 'the left', have traditionally supported the main Labour or social-democratic parties in general elections only to become implacably opposed to their policies when they formed governments.

The basis of this inter-left enmity is always related not to socialism but to aspects of capitalism and is based on the chastening reality of political power. In fact politics within the left is similar to politics outside the left: it is all about capitalism and its endemic problems. Not only that

but right across the entire spectrum of politics from so-called Left to Right and through Centre the basic ideas that are perceived as representing Left and Right have been adopted and abandoned by parties of differing political complexions.

British politics currently illustrates this point: the Blair government is pursuing viciously authoritarian policies and backing the aggressive expansionism of a particularly vicious United States establishment. Judged by the absurd yardstick for determining positions on the swingometer of Left and Right such policies would be seen as extremely right-wing. Conversely, the new Tory leader, David Cameron, is trying to lead his party back to favour with the electorate with gestures of sympathy for the poor, the oppressed and the intellectually deprived which he believes might fool people into the belief that the Tories really do care. In fact policies wrongly seen by the pundits to be essential parts of Labour's political stock-in-trade.

Historically, all three of the big political parties in Britain have advocated or used nationalisation -- once the sacred cow of the British Left - when economic circumstances have shown a need for such a policy. Again, all three parties accepted the economic thinking underwriting the welfare state and all three have accepted the Keynesian economic philosophy when it was wrongly believed to be the panacea for the intractable ills of the system and

especially the problem of managing economic demand.

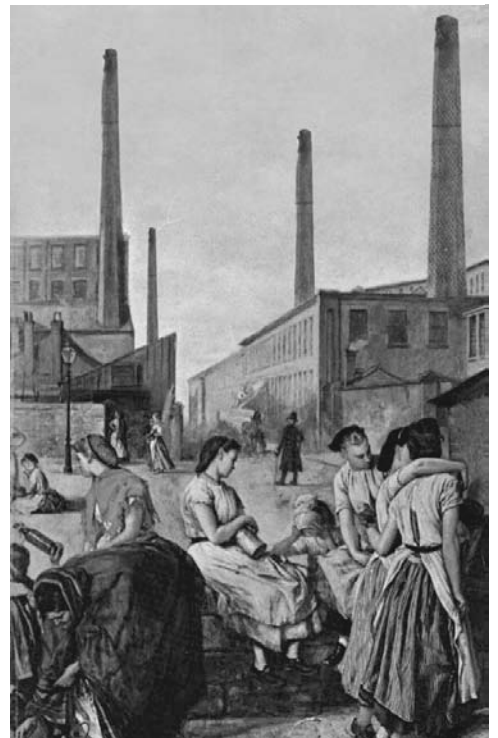
Winning elections

The reality of politics today is that political parties represent the corporate face of organised groups of career-orientated politicians whose cushy, well-paid jobs are dependent on selling old and failed political formulae dressed in worthless verbiage to a gullible electorate. It is not a question of honesty, sincerity or sagacity; wise and sincere people elected to government may indeed be able to soften some of the nasty features that capitalism throws up, but a government endowed with a surfeit of wisdom and sincerity could not make a system of economic anarchy and competition - a system predicated on the exploitation of the many by the few - run in the common interest.

Mere poverty and absolute destitution, the gigantic organisation of mass murder, which is war, homelessness, crime, social alienation and all the other features of the capitalist way of life are not caused by stupid, brutal or insincere politicians; they are endemic to capitalism. That is the demonstrable assumption on which the case for socialism - our case - is based; that is why we say it is social and economic system that has got to be changed and not its political functionaries. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE

“the serf would be converted from a feudal slave into a wage slave under the illusion that they were being given their freedom”



Bored with politics?



Politics is not just about the antics of career politicians - or at least doesn't have to be.

If you ask people "what is a party?" they are likely to reply something along the lines of "a group of people who want to get elected". If you then ask them why they think these people want to get elected, the reply, if they're feeling charitable, will be "to do things for the country" or "to help other people". If they're not feeling charitable, they'll say "to help themselves" or that "they're just in for what they can get".

The truth - both as to what people think and what politicians want - will be something in between. Since up to 70 percent of people turn out to vote at elections and vote for politicians and their parties, they can't really think that all that politicians want to do is to line their own pockets or further their own careers. They must be giving them some credit for wanting to do more, otherwise they'd be exposing themselves as fools for voting for them. And some politicians can show that they genuinely want to help other people, while at the same time of course making a career and some money for themselves.

Being a politician is a sort of profession, like a lawyer or a doctor. A politician's trade is to get into parliament or the local council to run the administrative side of capitalism. To do this, they must get elected and, to get elected, they must promise to do things for people; they must find out what's worrying people and then promise to do something about it.

This is why parties don't need principles. Or, put another way, they only need one principle (if it can be called that) and that's "get elected". In the past some parties, the Labour Party for instance, used to campaign to try to win people over to

their point of view. Not any more. Today politicians just promise people what they want to hear.

Although Blair, Mandelson and New Labour earned themselves a reputation for cynicism by the way they raised this to a fine art, actually the best practitioners of this have been the Lib-Dems, who've long had "focus groups" to tell them what to promise people in some area they've targeted. Now the Tories under Cameron are practising this in a more serious way too.

This kind of politics - which is dominant today - rests on a number of assumptions and has a number of consequences.

1. It accepts the status quo. It accepts capitalism and seeks merely to work within it. Politics becomes a question of choosing the best capitalism-management team from amongst competing groups of politicians.

2. Politics becomes a profession. You vote for a politician to do something for you and you reward them for the service by voting for them.

3. Politics becomes an activity in which only a minority - the professional politicians - participate. Most people's only involvement in politics is, literally, once every few years when they go and put an X on a ballot paper. Then they go home and let the person elected get on with the job.

4. Elections become more and more a sort of referendum, a plebiscite on the record of the outgoing government or council. People's participation in politics becomes simply giving a thumbs up or a thumbs down to the outgoing administration. If they don't mind what they've done, they vote them in again. If they're not happy then they vote in some

other lot.

Politics becomes a spectacle in which people are just passive spectators watching the goings-on of politicians. The media - especially TV - play to this, presenting politics in between elections as a soap. But it is not even a good spectacle. It's boring and the actors are all second and third rate. It doesn't work either. Nothing seems to change and nothing does change. The same old problems continue, with the professional politicians only being able to tinker about and patch things up a little.

The end result is that politics is seen as completely boring and that people don't want to know about it, except in the few weeks before a general election. People know that voting doesn't change anything and that the only power they have is to vote the Ins Out (or In again) or vote the Outs In; to change the management team, while their day-to-day lives are unaffected and unchanged.

No wonder people become apathetic, resigned and cynical.

A different politics

Can things change? Yes, they could but it's not going to be through conventional politics, only through a quite different kind of politics. A politics which rejects and aims to change the status quo. A politics which involves people participating and not leaving things up to others to do something for them.

Besides involving people surrendering their power to act to others, conventional politics is based on the illusion that what happens depends on what the politicians in power do; that politicians really do control things; that politics is in the driving seat. But this isn't the case. It is the way society is organised to produce things that is the main factor determining the way we live and what happens - and what doesn't happen. In other words, what is important is the sort of social and economic system we live under, not which party of professional politicians controls the government. That's why changing governments changes nothing.

The present system - capitalism, with its class privilege, production for profit and coercive state machine - is by nature incapable of being made to serve the common good; as a profit-making system it has to put making profits before meeting people's needs. Before we can think about achieving a better world, it must go. What is needed, as a framework within which to solve the economic and social problems we now face, is a classless society where productive resources are held in common, where there's production to satisfy people's needs and not for profit and democratic administration not government over people. In a word, socialism (in its original sense).

When more and more people realise this they will begin organising for it, in the places where they work, in the neighbourhoods where they live, in the various clubs and associations they are members of, but, above all, they will need

to organise politically. Who says "politically" also says "political party". So we are talking about a "socialist party".

Unfortunately so associated has the word "party" come to be with conventional politics that many people (including our anarchist critics) imagine that we, too, are proposing just another organisation of political leaders for people to follow; that we're saying "vote for us and we'll bring in socialism for you". But we're not. By "socialist party" we mean a party of people who want socialism, people organised democratically to win control of political power for socialism.

Obviously, a mass socialist party like this does not yet exist, but it is our view that, for socialism to be established, it should. Without having any delusions of grandeur, we try to organise ourselves today in our small party in the same way we think that a mass socialist party should organise itself: without leaders and with major decisions being made democratically either by a referendum of the whole membership or by a conference of mandated delegates and other decisions by elected committees. The "socialist party" would be a mass movement of people who wanted socialism, not a party of professional politicians or a party of professional revolutionaries or even of people who wanted to serve the people.

The same goes for participation in elections (since a mass socialist party would contest elections). Here too, we try to anticipate how we think a mass socialist party, when it emerges, should behave. Its candidates should not seek to be leaders, separate from those who vote for them, but should be standing as delegates to be mandated by those who want socialism. This is why when we stand in elections all we advocate is socialism. Not reforms of capitalism, not promises to do things for people, as the conventional parties do.

If you want a better world, you are going to have to bring it about yourselves. That's our basic message. It's no good following leaders, whether professional politicians or professional revolutionaries. In fact, following anybody (not even us) won't get you anywhere. The only way is to carry out a do-it-yourself revolution on a completely democratic basis. Democratic in the sense that that's what the majority want. And democratic in the sense that that majority, rather than following leaders, organises itself on the basis of mandated and recallable delegates carrying out decisions reached after a full and free discussion and vote.

That's what politics can be, and should be. And has to be if things are ever to change. ■

ADAM BUICK

"Being a politician is a sort of profession, like a lawyer or a doctor"



Politicians? A shower, an absolute ruddy shower!

Will Labour lose?

The present Labour government appears to have run out of steam, but trading one group of career politicians for another is not the answer.

An astute observer once said "governments are not elected...they are dismissed". According to this view, after a party has had a period in power the electorate consciously aims to get rid of it by voting for a rival party in a decision regarded as the "lesser of two evils". And it is undoubtedly true that every government - regardless of political banner - has always ended by alienating the electorate that once supported it. Many voters believe politicians are dishonest or have become cynical about elections, reasoning that "60-seconds of democracy" is small recompense for five years of neglect and policies that rarely express their preferences. If elections are so meaningless, some reflect, then there can be little point in voting - a sentiment borne out by low electoral turnout.

Despite being unable to find lasting solutions to workers' problems, political parties must always try to combat voter disillusionment. Behaving like chameleons, they must search for ways to improve their image, reinvigorate old policies and give the appearance that this time things will be different, this time the electorate will be given exactly what it wants. Before the 1997 general election the Labour Party successfully engineered its own metamorphosis, re-branding policies and redefining its agenda. The commitment to nationalisation enshrined in the 1918 Party

constitution was abolished and Trade Union influence over policy - always more mythical than real - was publicly abandoned. Its image, thus transformed, seemed revitalised and business, media and the electorate acclaimed the party that now called itself New Labour.

But nine years after the Labour Party was enthusiastically swept into government, the same electorate cannot wait to dismiss them. Reviewing the May local elections results the Electoral Reform Society concluded the Labour government faces "wipe-out" in the next general election and "predicts that Labour stand to lose 149 of its present 355 MPs bringing its commons strength down to 206 - even worse than 1983". Ministers have responded with conciliatory messages that Labour will listen more closely in future and, in the

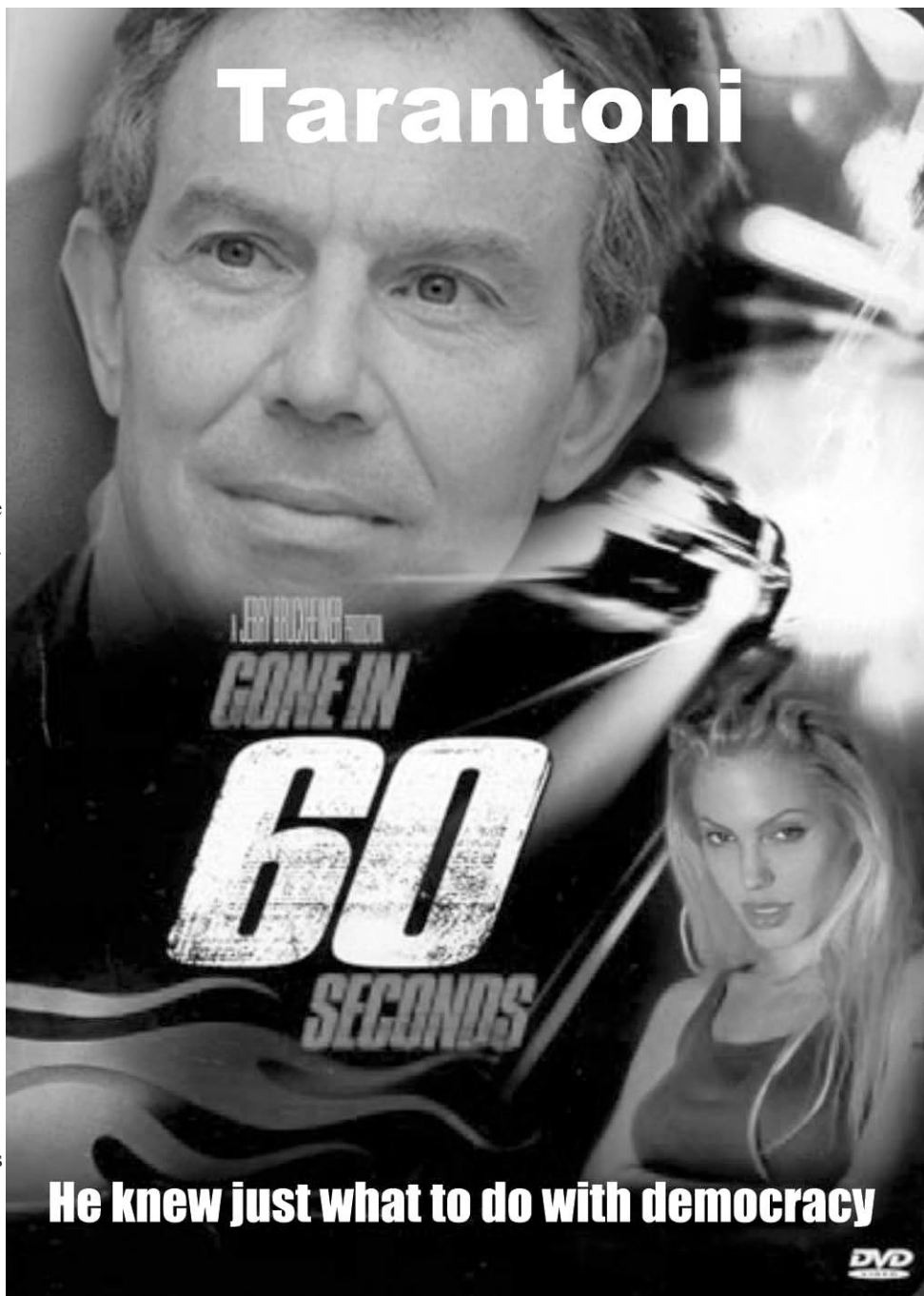
words of John Prescott, "renew itself after nine years in government" (*Observer*, 28 May).

In the third week of June this year, Labour's tattered image took another knock when an Ipsos Mori poll revealed that one in four Labour supporters wants their party to lose the next election. The poll deduced that "the leadership is becoming increasingly divorced from its own grass roots, 23 per cent agree Labour should be kicked out of power". Supporters wanted the party to experience "a period out of office to rethink what they stand for and what their vision is for the future". A majority of those polled expects the next general election to end with either a hung

parliament or a Tory majority, believing a re-launched Conservative Party to be more in touch with what ordinary people think. In the wake of hospital cutbacks, Home Office scandals and the 'peerages for cash' fiasco, Hazel Blears conceded, "the voters are angry that we have taken our eye off the ball" (*Observer*, 18 June).

At the end of June, Labour Party fortunes went from bad to worse. In the double election in Blaenau Gwent - where Parliamentary and Welsh Assembly by-elections were held simultaneously - an embittered electorate took revenge by voting down both Labour Party candidates. The elections were prompted by the death of Peter Law, who had defected from

Tarantoni



Labour and succeeded in overturning a 19,000 Labour majority in 2005. Until it was lost, Blaenau Gwent, whose past MPs include Aneurin Bevan and Michael Foot, was regarded as Labour's safest seat. Defeat in the Assembly election denied Labour of the majority it hoped to regain in the Welsh Assembly.

The wave of disillusionment is not just confined to Labour voters, however, with disaffection spreading inside the Labour Party itself. Labour Party membership has declined dramatically since 1997 and is now below the 200,000 mark - the lowest level since Ramsay MacDonald split the party in the 1930s. The membership has grown weary of being implicated in what the media call a "conspiracy of lies," and resentful of arrogant leadership.

A YouGov poll presented to the Compass conference on 17 June found that only 25 percent of Labour Party members believe they influence Party policy, while three-quarters felt policy had been hijacked by rich donors whose influence has grown as membership has shrunk. The Labour Party, desperately short of funds and like many of the electorate struggling with debt - estimated at £27 million -, must either depend on millionaires or turn to state funding, a move not popular with the public.

Aware of growing hostility, many senior members are distancing themselves from Prime Minister Blair by announcing that the Labour Party under Brown's leadership will revitalise itself and re-brand unpalatable policies. "The trouble with the current approach is that we will go out of power for 15 years," grumbled Michael Willis, speaking to the Compass conference. Like many, he blames Iraq and Blair's presidential style for the electorate's resentment (*Guardian*, 19 June). Every effort is being made to show 'clear water' between Labour under Blair and what Labour might be like under Brown. "Too many traditional Labour supporters felt the government had taken their goodwill for granted and said government was getting more difficult," said Ed Balls, Economic Secretary to the Treasury. Brown's political allies promise greater Party equality, reducing dominance of Whitehall and "restoring progressive politics" (*Guardian*, 19 June).

But if forecasters can be believed it now seems likely, irrespective of who actually leads the Party, that Labour will lose the next general election. Yet does it really matter which party forms the next government?

Capitalism is a splintered society; divided not just by sectional ownership of the means of production but by the economic rivalry of independent states striving to exercise authority over given geographical areas. Conventional political parties endorse the framework of capitalism and compete to win control over the state and to administer the economic system within its boundaries, which necessarily means perpetuating the wages system and the persistent hardship for wage and salary earners. The policies propounded by these

**"Labour's
tattered
image took
another
knock when
a poll
revealed that
one in four
Labour
supporters
wants their
party to lose
the next
election."**

must react. It is not the deceitfulness of politicians that is the problem but rather the economic structure of society.

But it is not just political parties that refuse to think outside the framework of capitalism. Most wage and salary earners rarely question the structure of society and passively support the system that always works against them. In misguided expressions of defiance that flow from frustration and lack of understanding, voters repeatedly swap Labour governments for Conservative, or Conservative governments for Labour - as they have on seven separate occasions since the second world war - in the hope that it will somehow make a difference. They are always disappointed by the outcome. Mandating a political party to administer capitalism means that workers surrender political power to their class enemy and condone the continuation of their own exploitation, their insecurity and their poverty - a lesson that workers seem unable to grasp as the same mistake is slavishly repeated over and over again.

But while trading one group of careerist politicians for another can never be the answer, changing society's economic structure is the only answer.

Capitalism exists only because workers allow it to exist. Changing the structure of society, however, is not as simple as changing political allegiance to a party. Capitalism is based firmly on a principle of leadership, where a minority in secret makes decisions and the excluded majority is told what they should do and how they should think. Changing the world's economic structure by converting the means of production from class ownership to common ownership requires that workers individually understand what they want and actively combine to change their condition. Socialism cannot be delivered by leaders and is achievable only by the concerted action of a politically conscious mass movement without direction or leaders, for only then will the majority become the decision-makers.

The task may be daunting but must begin somewhere. Workers would do well to start by considering whether capitalism - under any political party - is really the future they want. ■

STEVE TROTT

parties are similar because they are manifestations of the same political imperative - a continuation of capitalism - and are distinguishable only to the extent that they propose different organisation methods to administer the same economic system.

Voters vote governments out because they appear incompetent, incapable of finding solutions to the daily problems that confronts wage and salary earners. But government can never solve these problems because their permanent solution lies only in the abolition of capitalism and the wages system. Economic laws that politicians are powerless to change and leave little room for manoeuvre determine what politicians do and how they



Cooking the Books

Salt sellers

Doctors and nutritionists have long known that too much salt is bad for you as, by raising blood pressure, it increases the risk of strokes and heart attacks. So, it would seem only

normal that a body bearing the name "Food Standards Agency" should concern itself with the amount of salt that food companies put into the foodstuffs they offer for sale.

But the Food Standards Agency has to operate within the context of a capitalist economy where all businesses, including food companies, aim to make the biggest profits possible on behalf of their shareholders. As a result it has to be careful not to try to set "unrealistic" standards, i.e. standards that would reduce profitability.

In 2005 the FSA put out a consultative document with proposals to achieve a 40 percent reduction in people's average salt intake by 2010. The food industry was appalled and immediately began lobbying to have the proposals watered down.

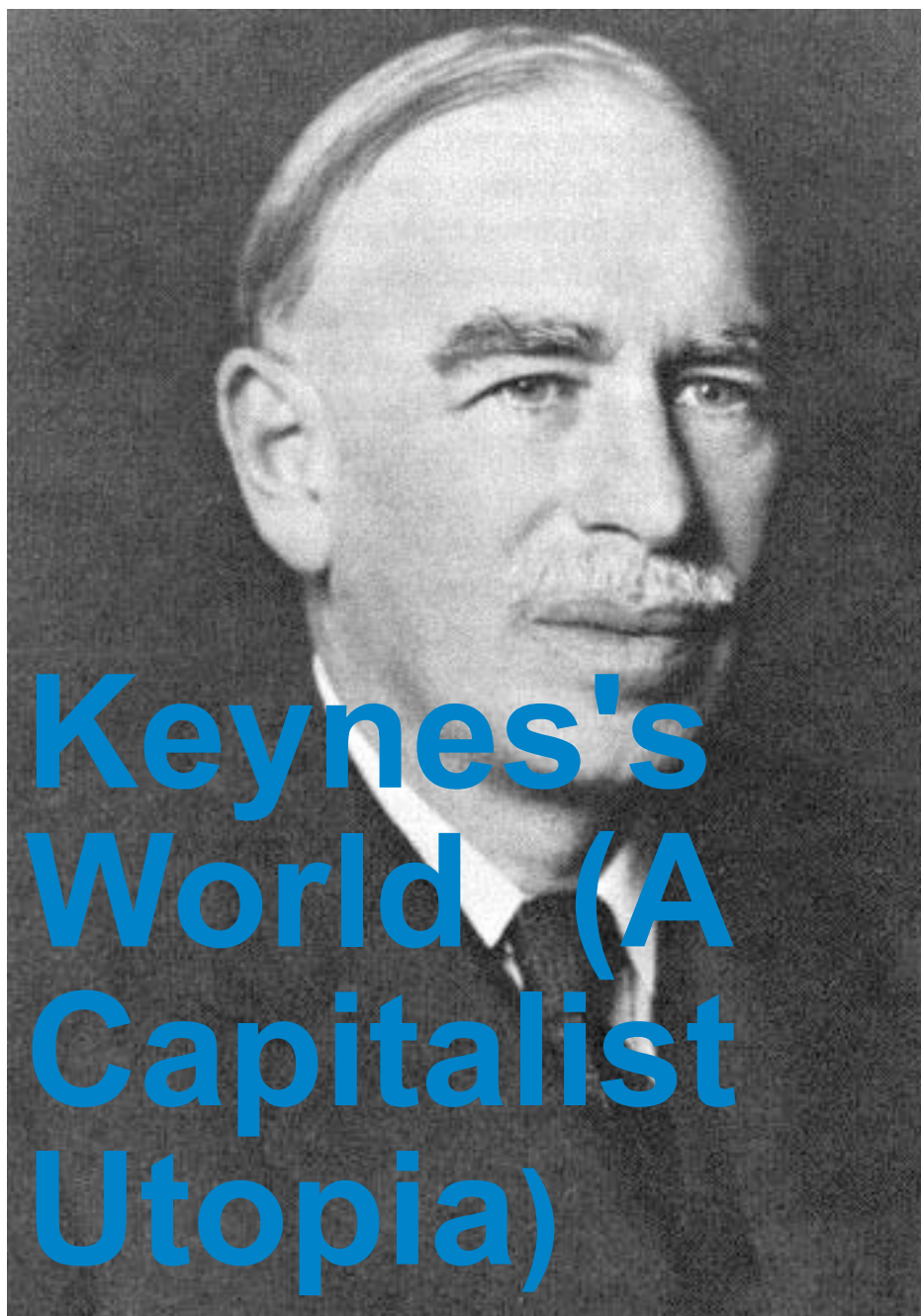
Salt has been used to preserve food since the dawn of civilisation and before. It also adds a distinctive flavour to food. The food industry was quick to seize on this in their counter-arguments. Reducing the salt content of their products, they said, would increase the risk of food poisoning (as if, these days, there weren't alternatives to salt as a food preservative). It would, they went on, make their products less tasty to consumers, whose interests of course they put above all else, etc, etc.

Times journalist Dominic Kennedy used the Freedom of Information Act to gain access to the documents submitted to the FSA by the food industry. What even he called "the most nakedly honest" argument came from Nestlé who submitted that:

"Salt is a major constituent in many products - and it is a cheap ingredient. Reduction in salt levels, even by a very small amount, significantly increases the overall cost of manufacturing the product, mainly because the ingredients used for the replacement of salt are much more expensive, e.g., herbs or meat extracts" (*Times*, 3 August. See also timesonline.co.uk/britain, search for "pro-salt campaign").

In the end the FSA agreed to lower its proposed standards. Hence the title of Kennedy's article "How the salt campaign was scuppered". In a society geared to human welfare, if doctors and nutritionists concluded that too much of some ingredient (whether salt, or sugar or fat since it's the same story there) was detrimental to people's health then, production not being in the hands of profit-seeking enterprises, the amount of the ingredient going in manufactured foods would be fixed taking this, and only this, into account.

But capitalism is not a society geared to serving human welfare.



Maynard Keynes imagined a society that would be centred on the pursuit of enjoyment rather than accumulation, but like other reformists he couldn't fathom a future without money and commodities.

Markets, profit, money, and private property seem as natural as the air we breathe to most people. Like Adam Smith, they believe that the "propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another" is an aspect of our human nature. So it is naturally assumed that commodity exchange

will continue to exist in the future, and that the only realistic way to overcome the problems we face is through a reform of capitalism. This is the "common sense" of today. And from this perspective, socialists appear to be unrealistic dreamers.

Certainly, socialists do dream of a new form of society, but our conclusion that fundamental social change is necessary is based on an understanding of today's reality. We know from experience and study that the serious problems which humanity faces, such as poverty and war, arise naturally from the capitalist system itself. History also teaches us that other forms of society have preceded capitalism, so this system is neither eternal nor rooted in "human nature." And we also have an idea of how to achieve socialism by means of a revolutionary political movement.

The aim of this article, however, is not so much to refute the claim that socialists are unrealistic, as to throw this same criticism back at those who believe capitalism will somehow work out its problems in the future. This reformist view, quite frankly, is a daydream. To concoct their capitalist utopia, reformists have to overlook the nature of capitalism as a class-

divided system of production for profit, not to mention the fact that profit stems from surplus value obtained from workers.

The unreality of the reformists' standpoint becomes clear if we look at any of their depictions of a better future under capitalism. The view of the economist J.M. Keynes seems as good as any to consider, particularly since his stature has been high (at times) among both capitalists and self-styled leftists.

Keynes's prediction

In a 1930 article entitled "*Economic Possibilities For Our Grandchildren*", Keynes predicts a far better world in a hundred years. He does not attach any label to his future society circa 2030, but it is said to be a world where the "economic problem" has been solved. This is defined as the problem of scarcity, which he describes as the central economic problem that has confronted humanity throughout history. Overcoming scarcity will mean that people's "absolute needs" (as opposed to subjective needs) are fully met.

The solution to the problem of scarcity, Keynes says, is a continuation of the capital accumulation and technical innovation that have been raising the standard of living since the dawn of the "modern age" (capitalism) following centuries of stagnation. He views capital accumulation in material terms, noting that if capital increases at two percent a year, "the capital equipment of the world will have increased by a half in twenty years, and seven and a half times in a hundred years." He encourages the reader to "think of this in terms of material things - houses, transport, and the like."

This steady capitalist growth is the basis for Keynes's bold prediction that the standard of life in "progressive countries" in a hundred years' time "will be between four and eight times as high as it is to-day," even adding that it "would not be foolish to contemplate the possibility of a far greater progress still." Expressed in qualitative terms, he says that once economic scarcity has been overcome, we will be able to "devote our further energies to non-economic purposes."

What scarcity?

Before further examining Keynes's solution to "economic scarcity," it is worth considering whether scarcity, at least as he understands it, is indeed our main problem.

Keynes is hardly alone in raising the problem of scarcity. In a popular university textbook by Harvard professor Gregory Mankiw, who chaired the Council of Economic Advisors under George W. Bush, students are informed on the very first page that, "Scarcity means that society has limited resources and therefore cannot produce all the goods and services people wish to have - a society cannot give every individual the highest standard of living to which he or she might aspire" (*Principles of Economics*).

Here this problem of scarcity is both an explanation and a justification for why some people have a less than ideal life. But if society's resources are so limited, how can the rich (like Mankiw himself), and the ultra-rich, justify their own disproportionate consumption? The fact that a single individual, Warren Buffett, has 35 billion dollars on hand to donate to a charity run by another multi-billionaire, suggests that the "scarcity" some of us face does not stem from the limited resources of society.

The fact that the economic scarcity of certain individuals is an artificial condition, related to class divisions, should have been perfectly clear to Keynes. Already a century earlier, the Swiss economist Sismondi had been shocked to see first-hand how miserable workers in England were despite the tremendous advances in the output of production. The artificial nature of "scarcity" under capitalism becomes even clearer during a crisis, when factories remain idle because production is not profitable and commodities rot on shelves for a lack of customers.

Keynes wrote his article at the outset of the Great Depression, so he could not completely ignore the mass unemployment of the time. Yet, in his article, unemployment is dismissed as "growing-pains from over-rapid changes" or a "temporary phase of maladjustment." He was confident that in the long run things would work out, which is a bit rich coming from a man who reminded us that "in the long run we are all dead." Today, more than 75 years later, these growing pains continue. The "scarcity" resulting from unemployment seems unlikely to end any time soon.

Keynes's way of framing the problem in terms of scarcity, and finding the solution in increased production, only makes sense if it is assumed that we are already dealing with a socialist society. That is, in socialism, where there is social ownership of the means of production and the aim of production is to directly meet human needs, any expansion of material production or increase in labour productivity would potentially raise the standard of living for every member of society.

Things are a bit different under capitalism. We know from experience, for example, that the introduction of new technologies or increased productivity will not necessarily result in a shorter working day or improved standard of living. This seemingly illogical state of affairs is not surprising when we consider that technical improvements are only made to gain a competitive advantage that will result in higher profits.

Keynes chooses to ignore the obvious fact that the pursuit of profit underlies

technical innovation, making it seem instead as if every increase in production under capitalism will directly raise the standard of living for the population as a whole, bringing us that much closer to the end of scarcity.

Neighbourly thinking

How will we know when economic scarcity has become a thing of the past? Keynes writes: "The course of affairs will simply be that there will be ever larger and larger classes and groups of people from whom problems of economic necessity have been practically removed. The critical difference will be realised when this state of affairs becomes so general that the nature of one's duty to one's neighbour is changed."

He argues that the number of affluent members of society will increase to the point that people's way of thinking changes. Instead of being "economically purposive" (selfish), people will be generous towards each other. It is not at all clear, however, how "general" this state of affairs will have to be for a magical transformation in consciousness to take place.

The absurdity of Keynes's dream speaks for itself. Why would a person suddenly begin acting in a neighbourly fashion one day, if the competitive system that had fostered his avarice were still very much in place? Moreover, it takes considerable wealth today for a person to be able to devote his or her "energies to non-economic purposes." And even those able to retire from the business world, to engage in philanthropy and the like, appoint other "economically purposive" characters to manage their affairs. At any rate, few people are satisfied even after their "absolute needs" have been met, and most seek to accumulate a bit more just to be on the safe side. It should be obvious that the general way people think and behave will only fundamentally change once we are free of the insecurity that the competitive capitalist system breeds.

To his credit, Keynes does seem a bit disgusted by the selfish way people act under capitalism in its present form. But in a strange twist of logic, he argues that selfish behaviour will some day set us free from selfishness. In fact, he warns us not to start acting too generous, too soon: "But beware! The time for all this is not yet.

For at least another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves and to every one that fair is foul and foul

is fair, for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little longer. For only they can lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into daylight." Apparently, the road to paradise is paved with bad intentions.

"Economic bliss"

Keynes's depiction of what he jokingly refers to as "economic bliss" is very brief, but he does manage to effectively contrast the stunted nature of present-day life with a far more civilised existence in the future. He notes, for example, that people will begin living for the sake of enjoying the present, rather than endlessly accumulating for tomorrow. Instead of the fawning over the rich, people would value those "who can teach us how to pluck the hour and the day virtuously and well, the delightful people who are capable of taking the direct enjoyment in things."

Keynes also points out that even after we are free of economic scarcity, many people will have a strong desire to work. He suggests, for instance, "three-hour shifts or a fifteen-hour week" would probably be "quite enough to satisfy the old Adam in most of us!" It is not clear whether this work is actually necessary, or just a way for people to occupy their time, but Keynes is right to suggest that work can be a source of human satisfaction (if taken in the proper dosage), which refutes the idea that no one would bother to work in socialism.

Compared to the *joie de vivre* that characterizes life in his future world, Keynes says that today's love of money "as a possession" would seem a "somewhat disgusting morbidity, one of those semi-criminal, semi-pathological propensities which one hands over with a shudder to the specialists in mental disease." And he looks forward to the day when "all kinds of social customs and economic practices" that are "distasteful and unjust" can at last be discarded. Although, true to form, he feels obliged to remind us that such habits are "tremendously useful in promoting the accumulation of capital," which is his motive force of history.

Many of Keynes's observations, ironically enough, are applicable to life in socialism, but his clear assumption is that the system of production from the days of economic scarcity remains more or less intact. Even though money will no longer be loved as a possession, it will still be cherished "as a means to the enjoyments and realities of life." In other words, people will still have to pay for whatever they consume. This naturally means that products are produced as "commodities" for exchange, and therefore the means of production are in the hands of private individuals or groups of individuals. Keynes even admits that there will be people in the future with "intense, unsatisfied purposiveness who will blindly pursue wealth," although he assures us that we "will no longer be under any obligation to applaud and encourage them."

In short, Keynes looks to a future where people are generous and enjoy life to the fullest even though production is carried out with profit in mind and money still makes the world go round. To which socialists can only respond: Dream on! ■

MICHAEL SCHAUERTE



Zionism: myth and reality

Zionism misled many Jewish workers with its promise of a "homeland for Jews". A recent book examines the fate of the million or so non-Jews in the state Zionism established.

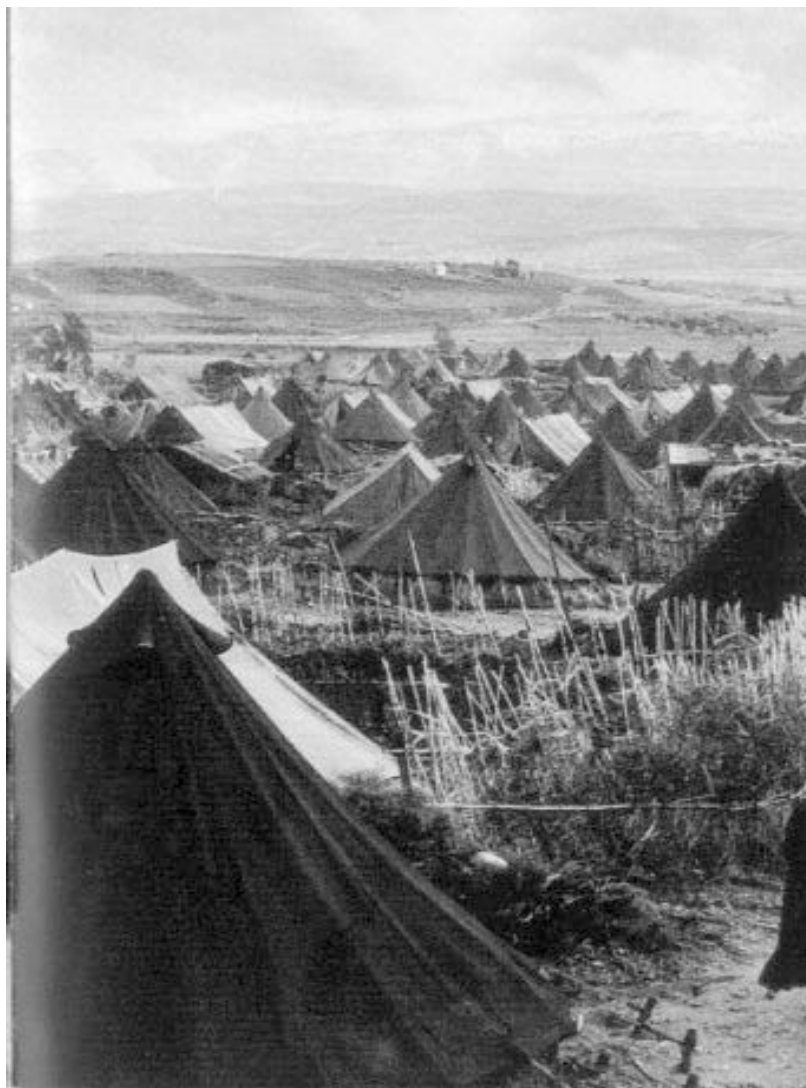
In 1999 when Susan Nathan went to live in Israel under the Law of Return her head was "full of romantic notions of Zionism and the Jewish state." Some three years later she moved from Tel Aviv to live, as the only Jew, in the Arab town of Tamra in the Galilee. Her book, *The Other Side of Israel* (published by Harper Collins last year), tells the story of her "journey across the Jewish-Arab divide", and gives a rare insight into the Jewish state from the perspective of the Palestinians who are Israeli citizens.

The journey began when she was a patient in the Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem, where she was surprised to find Israelis and Palestinians sharing the same ward, and Palestinians who were Israeli citizens: Israeli Arabs. The real shock came when an Orthodox woman was visited by her husband who had "a pistol on one hip and a rifle slung casually over his shoulder" - no one else seemed surprised by the presence of an armed civilian. He told Susan Nathan in a strong American accent that he had requisitioned an Arab home in East Jerusalem and never left home without a weapon. The reply to her suggestion that he would be better off in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City was "All of East Jerusalem belongs to the Jews."

More questioning came a few months later when she was invited to help with a student organisation - Mahapach, in connection with their work for disadvantaged communities in Israel,

"particularly the indigenous Arab population and the community of Jews of Middle Eastern descent...the Mizrahim." She knew of the latter but where did the Arabs live? Why had they been invisible to her during her first two years in Israel?

She was to learn that one million Arabs share the state, and that about a quarter of them are internal refugees. She was "profoundly shaken" by her first visit to an Arab area - the town of Tamra, made as part of the research for Mahapach. It



was strikingly different from any Jewish area she had seen, with obvious, chronic overcrowding.

At the home of Dr Asad Ghanem (head of politics at Haifa University) she heard about the discrimination exercised against the Arab population "in all spheres of Israeli life." In Arab communities there are thousands of homes judged illegal by the state and under the threat of demolition: in Tamra there are 150 such homes. The authorities' version is that the widespread illegal building is the act of law breakers, people squatting on land or not wanting to pay for a licence. So the police bring bulldozers "at crack of dawn" to destroy illegal homes. 500 Arab homes were destroyed in 2003.

Arab families are forced to build illegally because the state refuses to issue them with a building permit. Even when, as in Dr Ghanem's case, the home is built on land owned by his family for generations the permit is still refused: he pays regular heavy fines to ward off demolition. He asked Susan Nathan if she had made aliya, and it was difficult to answer. Her privileges as a Jewish immigrant were at the expense of his people, "sitting in his home the reality finally hit me. The intoxicating power trip had come to an abrupt halt." And the task of becoming informed had begun: the unlearning of her "lifelong Zionist training."

The Zionist myth is that the "Jews had reclaimed an empty, barren land - 'a land without people for a people without land' - we had made the desert bloom, we had filled an uninhabited piece of the Middle East with Kibbutzim, the collective farms that were the pioneering backbone of the state in its early years." Prior to 1948 there had been aggressive colonising of the land by Jewish immigrants, and a campaign of land purchases funded by the Jewish National Fund, but only 7 percent of Palestine had been purchased.

The other side of Israeli Independence in 1948 is for the Palestinians the Nakba (the catastrophe) the loss of their homeland to the Jewish state. 750,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes and country. A map in the book marks the position of the 400 villages which were emptied and then destroyed by the army. The Kibbutzim were built on the land of destroyed villages. Around a hundred villages survived, as did Tamra because it was not on the main route of the Israeli army and was a small community providing "a useful pool of cheap labour in the area." The original village had a population of 2,000, the number was swelled by refugees cleared from other villages. Photographs exist from 1948





Palestine, 1948, after the villages were destroyed.

which show "a sea of Red Cross tents" in which the refugees were housed for some years. One third of the present inhabitants of Tamra are internal refugees. A sizeable number of the 150,000 Palestinians who remained in the country and became Israeli citizens ("by accident rather than design"), were classified as "present absentees", and had their homes, land and bank accounts appropriated by the Custodian of Absentee Property. There is no instance of any property being restored to former Arab owners or compensation paid.

Apartheid

Dispossession still continues in various ways. Planning laws restrict Arab communities both in number - to the 123 listed in 1965 - and in area, even though the population has increased. Israel is an apartheid state which enforces policies of ethnic segregation. Dr Uri Davies, a Jew who, like Susan Nathan, lives in an Arab town, is quoted as applying the term apartheid in a specific sense to mean "the regulation and enforcement of racism and xenophobia in law." He defines the core element of an apartheid state as "the structure of laws that allows the colonising population to exploit the resources of the state - mainly land - to the disadvantage of the native population."

Though it is not publicly admitted "racist employment practices and the exclusion of Arabs from wealth generating sectors of the economy are the bedrock of state planning policies." Most computer systems do not list Arab communities. Arabic is the second official language, yet people are not allowed to use it at work - a woman was sacked from McDonalds for doing so.

There are two separate school systems, with much less money spent on Arab children. There is intensive surveillance of the Arab education system, teachers are effectively "banned from teaching about the Nakba...or about their people's connection to Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza" and the refugee camps in other countries. In Haifa the Arab Parents' Forum failed in an attempt to register their children at Jewish schools for 2004: Arab pupils are in a separate registration area.

Susan Nathan believes that what happened in the 1948 war is at the root of conflict in the Middle East. The price of creating a homeland was to inflict the "Jewish story of dispossession and wandering on another people - the Palestinians." She makes a distinction between making a comparison, quantitative judgements about the degree of suffering, and drawing a parallel which suggests "one set of events can echo another." Zionist organisations, she says, like the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Agency should be disbanded and the apartheid system ended; there should be equality between all citizens.

An old man told her of the time when it was possible to travel by train from the Galilee to all of the region's biggest cities "when the borders existed as no more than the lines on maps produced by the area's British and French rulers." Socialists never supported Zionism but opposed it as yet another nationalist delusion as what we aspire to is a world without national frontiers in which free movement is possible and where all people live together as equals. ■

PAT DEUTZ



Palestine - 1948. Some of the 804,767 Palestinian men, women, and children who were forced to become permanent refugees.

Travelling People

Caroline Moorehead: *Human Cargo: a Journey among Refugees*. Vintage £7.99.

The title says it all really: human beings shunted from one place to another, in response to political events, and treated as objects to be kept at arm's length or sent back as quickly as possible to wherever they came from. There are perhaps 12 million refugees in the world today, and twice that number of internally displaced people (IDPs), who get less attention, and also less financial support when they return to their homes.

Caroline Moorehead visited a number of areas where refugees live (or survive is perhaps a better word) and talked to many people. She starts in Cairo, full of 'lost boys' from other parts of Africa, originally mainly from Sudan but now increasingly from Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and elsewhere. Many asylum-seekers from Africa travel first to Italy, to Sicily and to Lampedusa, a small island less than 100 miles from the coast of Tunisia; many drown on the way there.

Between Mexico and California is a fence designed to reduce the flow of Mexican migrants northwards. The border is deliberately kept semi-closed, as the US needs some (but not too much) cheap Mexican labour power. But it is still policed in a draconian manner: for instance, a canal which provides a possible crossing point has been converted on the US side so that it's hard to climb out once you've swum over. Over two thousand people have died trying to cross the border, ten times the number who lost their lives trying to escape over the Berlin Wall.

Meanwhile, Australia has an extremely tough line on asylum, following its earlier racist 'White Australia' policy. Would-be migrants from Indonesia and elsewhere in south-east Asia have a hard time even getting there, following the introduction of Operation Relex, which involves naval vessels and aircraft turning back boats of asylum-seekers. Many of those who actually make it to Australia may be locked up indefinitely, despite having committed no crime.

Some Palestinians who fled their homes when Israel was established in 1948 have spent over fifty years in refugee camps - not many, though, because life in a refugee camp is hard and few can survive that long. Many more in number are the children born in camps, to parents who were themselves born there too.

Often, also, refugees are driven to suicide since their stories of violence back home may not be believed. One young Iranian killed himself in Newcastle in 2003, leaving a note that said, 'You have to kill yourself in this country, to prove that you would be killed in your own country.'

One encouraging aspect of the book is the way that local people, from Sicily to Australia and Newcastle, have rallied to support and help refugees in their midst. It is one thing to rail against those who are allegedly coming to steal jobs or live as scroungers, but it is quite another to encounter the hopelessness and destitution of people who just want somewhere to live without persecution and bring up their family.

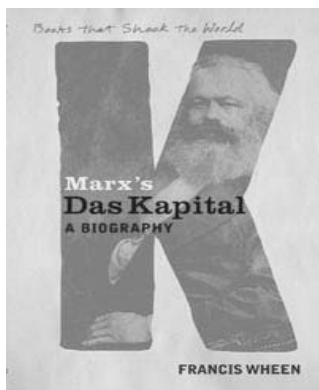
Moorehead makes a number of good points: that migration is 'the unfinished

business of globalisation', and that nobody wants to be a refugee. 'Why', she asks, 'should something as arbitrary as where one is born determine where one is allowed to live?' The answer, sadly, is that under capitalism, artificial lines on maps divide the world into different camps, which enable those who own the earth to defend their bit of it and to make claims on other bits. A sensible society would have no concept of refugeehood or any of the other states of oppression so movingly described here.

PB

Das Kapital

Marx's *Das Kapital* by Francis Wheen. Atlantic Books, 2006.



In a series of "Books That Shook The World" which includes Paine's *Rights of Man* and Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Wheen's biography of *Das Kapital* (to

give *Capital* its original German title) is fairly short at 130 pages including index. Wheen has already had a critical and commercial success with his biography of the man himself, *Karl Marx* (1999) and this work seems likely to do the same.

Das Kapital was planned to be the first of six volumes, but Marx only saw the first volume through to publication. The second and third volumes, and the volumes entitled *Theories of Surplus Value*, were all compiled from Marx's notes after his death. Apart from a brief Introduction, Wheen's book is divided into three chapters: gestation, birth and afterlife. There are no notes, bibliography or guide to further reading and although Wheen is mostly content to let Marx speak for himself he does occasionally paraphrase and in one place he is seriously mistaken. Wheen explains that value (socially necessary labour-time) may differ from price and sometimes price may be higher than value, but Wheen adds, "under a socialist system this surplus would be redistributed for the benefit of the workers" (p.33). Marx never argued this and the whole thrust of *Das Kapital* is that value, price and profit can never work for the benefit of the workers. Marx also, incidentally, never argued for redistribution, preferring instead to judge the success or failure of a social system by its ability to *produce* for human need. Wheen is rightly critical of commentators who read into *Das Kapital* things which are not there (e.g. increasing "immiseration" or impoverishment of the proletariat), but that has not stopped him falling into the same trap here.

Controversially, Wheen claims that *Das Kapital* should be thought of as a work of art and this was Marx's stated intention. *Das Kapital* is usually depicted as a work of science, but Marx seems to have considered art and science to have similar objectives -

that is, to see through surface appearances ("the veils of illusion") to reveal the underlying reality. And yet it was the late Louis Althusser who maintained that there was an "epistemological break" in Marx's writing, with the early artistic or philosophical work being only of marginal interest, whereas the later works such as *Das Kapital* contained his mature and scientific thinking. But as Wheen points out, in Althusser's posthumous memoir he admitted to being "a trickster and deceiver" and only ever studying "a few passages of Marx." Althusser and his work on Marx was a fraud. But even if Althusser was not a con-man, the distinction between an early and a mature Marx does not withstand serious scrutiny.

The alleged impact of *Das Kapital* on twentieth century politics is well summarised, including the fall of the Russian empire and China's contradictory claim to be "Marxist-Leninist" (Wheen insists that "'Market-Leninist' would be rather more apt"). The framework for viewing these and other events, argues Wheen, is to be found in Marx's writing on capital. For as Wheen puts it:

"Far from being buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall, Marx may only now be emerging in his true significance. He could yet become the most influential thinker of the twenty-first century."

LEW

Marx's party

A Rebel's Guide to Marx. By Mike Gonzalez. Bookmarks. 2006. 60pp. £2

While factually correct on the details of Marx's life, this SWP booklet suffers (as you would expect) from a significant distortion of Marx's views.

Marx is made out to be a proto-SWPer, obsessed with "building the party". In actual fact, while Marx did use the word "party", before the 1870s it was not in the sense of an organised vanguard, but rather as those, whether organised or not, who wanted communism (or socialism, the same thing), more what we would today call a current of opinion than its subsequent sense of party as an organisation.

Marx did, during the period of Germany's aborted bourgeois revolution of 1848-9, favour communists organising themselves as a distinct group to try to push the bourgeois revolution to its limits and beyond. But, once this period was over, he argued for this communist organisation to be disbanded.

Later, when he was active in the International Working Men's Association from 1864-1872, he advocated the working class organising into a distinct political party. By then "party" had begun to take on its modern meaning and Marx was associated with an organisation in Germany called the "Social Democratic Workers Party" (SDAP)



Venezuela and Chile

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised. Video by Kim Bartley and Donnacha O'Brian. 74 minutes. Available from Power Pictures - Screen Scene, 41 Upper Mount St, Dublin 2. <http://www.chavezthefilm.com>

In 1992 Hugo Chavez, a junior parachute officer, tried to seize power in Venezuela in a traditional South American coup. He failed and spent some time in jail. He then tried another way and in 1998 was elected President, with 56 percent of the votes cast; he was re-elected in 2000 with a 60 percent vote. In elections held to a constituent assembly in 1999 his supporters obtained 120 of the 131 seats.

Chavez is a populist nationalist and radical reformist not a socialist, but his programme of radical reforms and moving from private capitalism towards state capitalism threatened the vested interests of powerful private capitalist groups. According to anarchist and anti-parliamentary theory, which says that even if power can be won via the ballot box for radical change it can't be retained, what should have happened next was that the powerful groups whose interests were threatened should stage a coup and unleash a bloody repression. As, for instance, in Chile in September 1973:

"Socialism cannot come through the Parliament. If we look at a country like Chile we can see why. In 1973 the people elected a moderate socialist government led by President Allende. This democratically-elected government was toppled by a CIA backed military coup. Repression followed in which the workers movement was smashed and thousands of militants lost their lives" ("What is Anarchism?", www.struggle.ws/pdfs/whatis.pdf)

(This statement is both factually wrong and logically flawed. Allende became president in 1970 and so was not immediately overthrown as is suggested. And if he was a "moderate socialist", i.e. a mere reformist like the Labour and Social Democratic parties of Europe and Australasia, there have been plenty of other such governments, which have not been toppled in a coup; in fact, most haven't. Having said this, socialism cannot come through electing such governments but for quite other reasons than that they come to power through elections.)

On 11 April 2002, true to anarchist theory, a group of top Venezuelan army officers and business leaders did stage a coup. Chavez was arrested and taken to a secret destination where he was put under pressure to resign (he refused). It so happened that an Irish film crew, which had

which, after merging with another group, became in 1875 the "German Socialist Workers Party" (SADP). (It later changed its name to Social Democratic Party of Germany - SPD - which still exists today, as a reformist party.) Marx referred to it simply as the workers' party.

So, Marx's conception of party was that of an open, democratically-organised mass party, not a vanguard of self-appointed professional revolutionaries.

ALB

come to make a documentary about Chavez and Venezuela, was actually in the presidential palace at the time. *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* is a fascinating and instructive record of how events unfolded over the next few days (together with material from the originally-planned film and lots of Spanish with subtitles): the dejected ministers, the installation of the usurper president, the recapture of the palace by the presidential guard, the arrest of some of the plotters, the pro-Chavez street demonstrations and the return of Chavez two days later. He is still there.

So the coup failed. It failed because those who had voted for Chavez were prepared to take to the streets to back up their vote and because the bulk of the armed forces remained loyal to the constitution and the constitutionally-elected president. The anarchist theory that power obtained by the ballot box to effect radical changes can't be retained was disproved by experience.

What happened confirms rather our view that a socialist majority can both win and retain power via the ballot box if that majority is sufficiently organised and determined and if there is no question as to their democratic legitimacy. If pro-capitalist elements were to stage a coup after a socialist election victory it could prove to be even more short-lived than in Venezuela in April 2002. The slogan that anarchists and other chant on demonstrations that "the people united can never be defeated" is actually true, to back up an electoral victory too.

The film is being shown at the Anarchist Bookfair in London this month. It will be interesting to see how they will explain away the events it records. Perhaps they'll change the text of their leaflet to:

"Socialism may be able to come through the Parliament. If we look at a country like Venezuela we cannot see why not. In 1998 and 2000 the people elected a radical reformist government led by President Chavez. An attempt was made in 2002 to topple this democratically elected government but it failed because the government enjoyed majority popular support and the loyalty of the armed forces".

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SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX

An index to articles in 2005 can be obtained by sending two first-class stamps to Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Note of correction

The article "September 11, 2001: Reflections on a Somewhat Unusual Act of War" (September *Socialist Standard*) refers to arguments that it states were made by anti-war analyst Rahul Mahajan in his book *The New Crusade: America's War on Terrorism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002). In fact, these arguments were drawn from another book by the same author: *Full Spectrum Dominance: U.S. Power in Iraq and Beyond* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003).

In the August issue we stated that "China is using 47 per cent of the world's cement to complete the damming of the Yangzi" (p. 8). In the September issue we wrote that China was using "almost 70 percent of the world's cement supplies on a single dam project" (p. 9). Both figures can't be right. In fact, both are wrong. China is generally calculated as using 47 per cent of the world's cement (see, for example, <http://southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/125468/1/1893>) but not all of this is for the Yangzi dam project.

and her family, as well as the public, from an institution that goes hand-in-hand with unequal society? Draw a line under history and move on?

PAUL WILSON, Brighouse, West Yorks.

Reply:

Obviously if the monarchy is still around at the time socialism is established it would be abolished immediately. Such institutionalised privilege can have no place in a society of equals. This said, we don't see any point in wasting time campaigning to get it abolished under capitalism. Whether or not a capitalist state is a monarchy or a republic makes no difference to the economic structure of society, which is the root cause of the problems wage and salary workers face today. Just look at the USA, which has been a republic since the 18th century - Editors.

Obituary

Joe Richmond

Joe Richmond died a few months ago. He was a marvellous member. He taught me what little I know about the Materialist Conception of History and he was the best member I ever heard of on Engels's *Transformation From Ape To Man*. He was a great guy. He was a shipwright on the Clydeside and came across the socialist case from a trade union background (as an apprentice he has been involved in the unofficial - and illegal - 1944 apprentices' strike). He later became a school teacher. I remember him best as a lecturer at the Glasgow branch rooms in Berkley Street using fretwork pieces of wood to show how the

continents were formed. Years later on television I saw the same thing. He was also an attendee at various classes on philosophy at extra-mural Glasgow University courses where he embarrassed the lecturers with his corrections about the works of Hegel, Engels and Marx. After retiring Joe emigrated to Australia to be near his two sons. He rejoined the Socialist Party and kept up his interest in political matters. We have had many great members, he was one of the best. To his wife Anna and his children we extend our sympathies.

Thanks a lot Joe,

RD



MASS SUICIDE

Under the title "Do not willingly contribute to the mass suicide of the human race" the *Empire News* (24 June, 1956) had the following:

"The highest radioactive deposit in a single day from a thermo-nuclear weapon test was 100 microcuries a square mile at Milford and 25 at Harwell. Daily deposits at Harwell and Milford, however, are generally similar. Danger from these radioactive particles is very slight, say scientists. But one of the radioactive substances, known as strontium 90 may be deposited in grass which is cropped by animals. This gets into their bones and may cause cancer. So the experts warn: limit the number of atom tests. Fears that rainwater may be contaminated from the Monte Bello atom test have arisen in Queensland, Australia, and people have been warned not to drink it for a few days."- The above was taken from a news item, "Atom-Rain Tests."-(*Empire News*, 24.6.56.)

But such is the nature of capitalism; that even though the rival Governments know they may be instrumental in causing the "virtual suicide of the

human race." They dare not let up; for fear of conceding an advantage to their rivals; yet they have the effrontery to call capitalism a

civilised society! Why, by comparison with this, even the most senseless butchery in history seems like sanity. The human race may be virtually dying on its feet; and still the people do nothing about it; when will they get wise; and act on their own behalf instead of waiting and hoping for someone else to put the world right for them?

Workers of the world, put not your trust in leaders. Instead fashion the world the way you want it yourselves by organising for socialism; then you can rest secure in the knowledge that the only developments which will be undertaken will be those which will be of benefit to all.



(From article by Phil Mellor, *Socialist Standard*, October 1956)

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1.That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2.That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3.That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4.That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6.That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7.That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8.The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Is There Life After Tony Blair?

Even by the standards we have come to expect from them, it was an outrageous piece of New Labour spin to tell us that the leadership handover between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown would be "smooth and orderly". For one thing Blair and his cronies must have known that announcing his intention to resign on some unnamed, unpredictable date in the future ensured that the handover would take place after a long period of chaos as a succession of hopefuls - and no-hopers - pushed themselves as potential leaders. We had already had the sly briefing about Gordon Brown's alleged "psychological flaws" (which must apply to many politicians). The infighting could have been prevented by settling on a firm date but whenever this was raised with Blair he brushed it aside by saying that he would go when he had done his job of clearing up a few trivial matters like crime, the wars in the Middle East and Iraq, the NHS, education, poverty... The very idea is laughable, that there will ever, can ever, be a day when a political leader can pass into well earned retirement because they have succeeded in making all the necessary adjustments and improvements to society, so that from now on all will be smooth and orderly. While there is no evidence that Blair is an avid student of history it is clear that he has absorbed many of its essential lessons in the sleazier arts of politics.

Morrison

What can be said, on that score, about Gordon Brown? When he made that deal, across the Granita table, with Blair, did he not have an inkling of what he was committing himself to? Was he entirely innocent of any doubts about politicians' readiness to keep their word? Did he not reflect on the examples of other nominated heirs to a party leadership who had failed miserably to achieve it? When the Attlee government was elected in 1945 the Deputy Leader of the party was Herbert Morrison, a canny, cocky political operator with the common touch. In contrast, Attlee was understated, not to say drab; when he was made Leader in 1935 Hugh Dalton, who was later Chancellor of the Exchequer, bemoaned "...a wretched and disheartening result... And a little mouse shall lead them". After Labour's emphatic win Morrison made it clear that he had no intention of agreeing to Attlee as Prime Minister and that, before he accepted he job, Attlee should submit himself to a vote of confidence by the Parliamentary Labour Party.

This was the kind of situation which, in recent times, must have provoked an incandescent row between Brown and Blair. Attlee, however, was in a different mode. After his election triumph he went quietly with his wife for tea at the Great Western Hotel in London and it was there, among the delicate china and the scones, he was told that King George VI was anxious to fill the vacancy for a new government for British capitalism and would he please go to Buckingham Palace to set the royal mind at rest. Attlee took the view that the monarch should not be kept waiting while the Parliamentary Labour Party made up its mind so he went at once to the Palace where "without quibbles" as he put it, he accepted the top job. (He got his vote of confidence the next day - as if an hysterically triumphant, desperately ambitious, party would ever have dreamed of denying it to him).

Churchill

Attlee later described the notion of Morrison being party leader as "fantastic" - seriously out of touch with reality. He continued as leader after his government were defeated in the 1951 election, leaving Morrison to sulk and snipe, fretful in the knowledge that the longer Attlee stayed on the weaker his chances of succeeding. It was clear at that time that if the Labour Party was to have any hope of clawing their way back into government they would need to undertake a comprehensive overhaul of their policies and presentation but Attlee was too weary after his years in government to do anything about it. That was probably the time for him to retire but instead he kept going, which had the effect of stifling Morrison's leadership chances (Morrison was, of course, convinced that this was the motivation). After Labour was defeated again, in 1955, Attlee carried on for a few months and then suddenly resigned, going to the House of Lords. The delay in his going had had its effect; Hugh Gaitskell had emerged as the likeliest leadership candidate and he won the ballot over both



Morrison and Aneurin Bevan, leaving Morrison to nurse his bitter disappointment.

The Tory government which followed had its own inheritance problems for Winston Churchill had always made it clear that he would be succeeded as leader by his

Deputy Anthony Eden; for example in 1942 Churchill told the King that if he failed to return from one of his trips abroad Eden should be asked to take his place. In spite of the Tories' calamitous defeat in the 1945 election Churchill hung on as leader (in any case he never made any secret of his reluctance to take account of his party's wishes). But he was bored in opposition and he might have resigned then except that his "Iron Curtain" speech seemed to revive his confidence in himself as an historic figure so he stayed, while playing on Eden's loyalty by throwing out occasional hints that he would hand over in the near future - rather like Tony Blair today. At the same time Churchill made it clear that he would regard any suggestion that he should resign as base treachery. Even when he had a succession of strokes, notably in 1949 and 1953, which progressively disabled him, he kept himself in the job. It seemed as if he would never go.

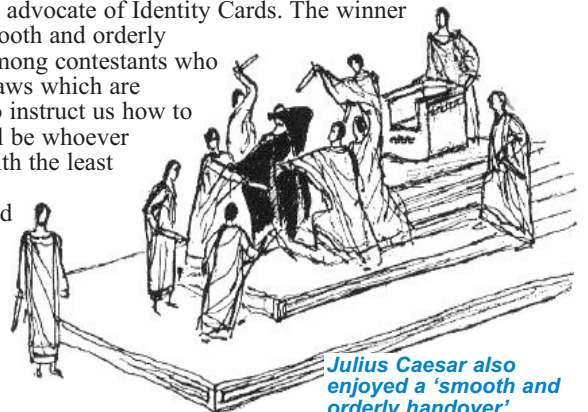
Eden

The grinding pressure of disappointment aggravated Eden's emotional and medical difficulties; at the time of Churchill's 1953 stroke Eden was convalescing abroad after an operation, which prevented him taking over. In any case Churchill, in the words of his son Randolph, "fought his way back to health with a Roman mastery of mind over flesh" so that he was still Prime Minister when he turned 80 in November 1954. He resigned in April 1955 and Eden came at last into his inheritance, except that it was a procession of disasters. Under scathing criticism from a normally loyal Tory press - the *Daily Telegraph* ranted about "changes of mind by the Government; half measures; and the postponement of decisions" - the breaking point for him was his obsessive but doomed attempt to revive the standing of British capitalism in the Middle East by the Suez invasion (his wife later told how at times she had felt as if the Suez Canal was running through their living room). By now a very sick man, virtually living on prescribed drugs, Eden gave up and went to the West Indies to recuperate. After all that waiting, he had been Prime Minister for less than two years.

Spite

A common factor in these episodes, as with the present clash between Blair and Brown, is the absence of any differences in policy. The disputes were not about whether to run capitalism but who should be allowed to indulge their ambitions by doing so. From those roots a tangled growth of spite and venom has flourished, in which Brown abruptly ceased to be the assumed, widely welcomed, successor to Blair and instead became the target of vicious personal attacks, some of which originated from people who were themselves far from blameless. "Compulsive obsessive", "autistic" and "childish vanity" were among the kinder assessments of Brown. Perhaps most audacious of all was Charles Clarke's charge that Brown is a "control freak", which overlooked the fact that when he was Home Secretary Clarke was a relentless, determined advocate of Identity Cards. The winner of this "smooth and orderly process" among contestants who lay down laws which are designed to instruct us how to behave will be whoever emerges with the least shredded clothing and the fewest wounds. ■

IVAN



Julius Caesar also enjoyed a 'smooth and orderly handover'.



Voice from the Back

The Inequalities Of Capitalism

A good example of the class division in modern society can be seen when we look at the wealth of the top 0.1 percent of the population in the USA. "An analysis by David Cay Johnston in the New York Times found that the average annual inflation-adjusted income of this group increased by 2.5 times, to \$3 million (£1.6 million), from 1980 to 2002. The average net worth of those on the Forbes 400 list has mushroomed in the past 20 years, rising from \$390 million (£206 million) to \$2.8 billion (£1.48 billion)" (*Times*, 17 August). As for you and your family, "inflation adjusted" how are you doing? A little less than \$3 million this year I would imagine.

Pardon Our French

Nothing sums up capitalism better than the article that appeared in the *Observer* Magazine (27 August) when dealing with the former member of the Workers Revolutionary Party John Bird, who it describes as an entrepreneur. We think this might mean con man but we never went to French classes. This enterprising



person may be more familiar to you as the owner of the magazine *The Big Issue* - yes the one you bought because you felt sorry for the lady outside the bus station. Here is the owner of that magazine on the homeless and how he feels about it. "Fifty years ago a homeless person wasn't allowed to sleep rough or beg. They'd get a menial job but they were part of society. Nowadays they pay nothing. They are

infantilised. And it costs us £60,000 to keep each one of them in that state." We must go to French classes. Perhaps entrepreneur really means "arrogant owning class bastard."

Exploitation

It is a basic premise of socialists that all wealth that is produced inside modern capitalism is the product of the working class and that the capitalist class live off the surplus value that the working class produce. Now we have such pillars of capitalist society as the *Observer* and *Reuters* agreeing with us. "The 20 largest quoted companies in the UK make an average of over £96,000 pre-tax profit per employee, according to research carried out by the *Observer*. ... BG, formerly British Gas, made by far the most - approximately £445,000 ..." (*Observer*, 27 August). Are you understanding these figures? On average your employer cons you out of more than £1,800 a week and in the case of BG over £8,000 a week. Why aren't you a socialist? Are you a shareholder in BG?

The American Dream

There is a popular misconception about that as the USA is the world's most developed capitalist country and the most productive the American workers must be well off. A recent report from the Washington-based Economic Policy Institute shows that this is not true. "Adjusted for inflation, average wages in the US are now lower than they were in 2000 - so the benefits of the rapid increases in productivity ... are not being passed to the workers. In fact, as the New York Times reported last week, official figures show that wages and salaries now make up the smallest part of GDP since records began in 1947.... In 1965, CEOs earned 24 times more than the average worker; by 2005 it was 262 times. ... The top 20 per cent of asset-holders now control 85 per cent of all America's wealth." (*Observer*, 3 September)

Bones of Contention

The National Museum of Kenya is to re-open next year after extensive renovations. It will feature a special exhibit The Origins Of Man which will display the

key fossil finds of Africa's Great Rift Valley - considered by many to be the cradle of humanity. All round celebrations locally, you may imagine. Not a bit of it. "It's creating a big weapon against Christians that's killing our faith," said Bishop Boniface Adoyo, who is leading the hide-the-bones-campaign." (*Observer*, 10 September). This individual is chairman of the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, which claims to represent churches of 35 denominations with 9 million members. No surprise there, he is carrying on the long tradition of Christian suppression of scientific enquiry.

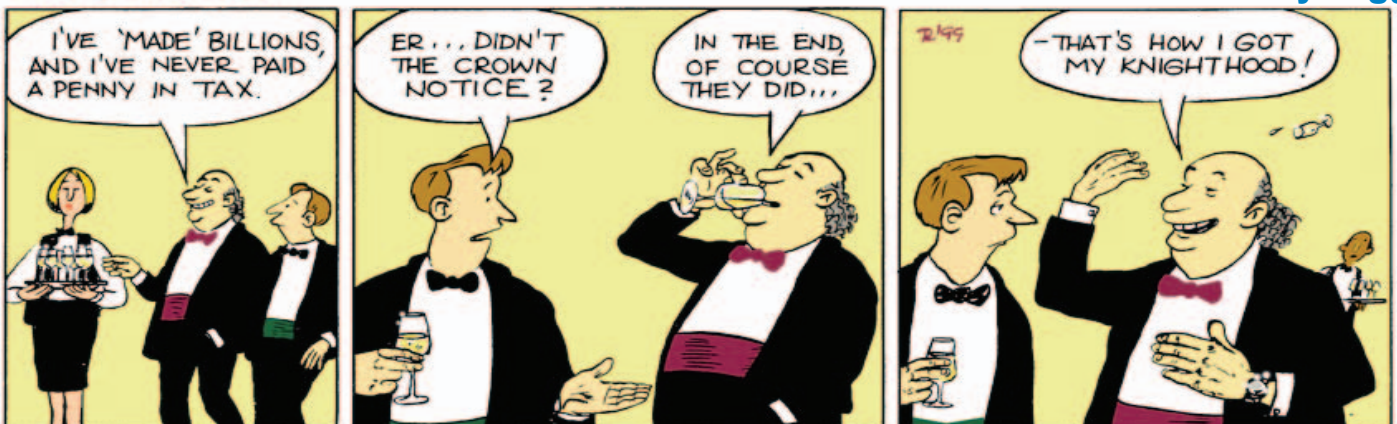
Big Brother Is Watching You

George Orwell's 1984 was a dystopia where every move of the worker was monitored, but Orwell's nightmare has arrived. "Learn that truth, and learn it well; what you do at work is the boss's business. Xora and SurfControl are just some of the new technologies that have sprung up in the past two years peddling products and services - software, GPS video and phone surveillance, even investigators - that let managers get to know you really well. The worst mole sits right on your desk. Your computer can be rigged to lock down work files, restrict Web searches and flag e-mailed jokes about the CEO's wife. 'Virtually nothing you do at work on your computer can't be monitored', says Jeremy Gruber, legal director of the US National Workrights Institute, which advocates work place privacy" (*Time*, 11 September). The article goes on to quantify how widespread this snooping is. 76 percent of employers watch your use of the Web, 36 percent track the content and time spent on the keyboard. 38 percent hire staff to sift through your e-mail and 38 percent have fired workers over the last 12 months for misuse of the e-mail.



Free Lunch

by Rigg



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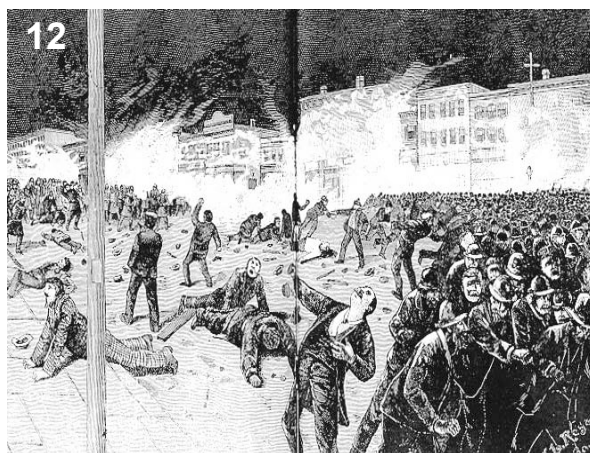
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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 4 November** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.
TEL: 020 7622 3811
E-MAIL: spgb@worldsocialism.org

Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Thought for food

The food industry under capitalism is part of the problem of starvation and malnutrition, not its solution.

Of all the ways in which capitalism means extremes of poverty and privilege, deprivation and excess, none is greater than in the production, distribution and consumption of food. According to Oxfam, 800 million of the world's 6.5 billion population are malnourished, while two billion have a diet which is lacking in essential vitamins and minerals. At the same time obesity in the industrialised countries is on the increase. Obesity is not usually the result of eating too much good food - it is a working-class condition stemming from cheap food that adds bulk but not nutrition.

Capitalism seeks the nourishment of profits, not persons. There is more than enough food in the world to feed all of its

Editorial Testing times

North Korea is trying to blast its way into becoming a de facto member of the "nuclear club". The club's five officially recognized members are up in arms, so to speak, by the nuclear test this state-capitalist regime conducted. "A provocative act!" says the head of the club's senior member-nation, while another leader, not to be outdone, denounces the nuclear test as "a flagrant and brazen violation of international opinion". Like "old-money" members of an exclusive golf club, the nuclear powers have hurled abuse on the tacky upstart who dares to seek membership, overlooking how much the two sides have in common.

The "responsible" nations, so appalled by the militarism of Kim Jong-il, have stockpiles of nuclear weapons that the pot-bellied dictator can only dream of obtaining. Lest we think these weapons are in safe hands, consider how US leaders have talked openly in recent years of employing nuclear "bunker busters". And the widespread use of depleted uranium weapons in Iraq and Afghanistan means, in a sense, that the line between "conventional" and nuclear war has already been crossed. Now the US and its nuke-wielding brethren, posing as the "international community", have taken a break from their armed conflicts to warn us of a grave threat to civilization. Are we supposed to laugh or cry?

But don't imagine that we should back the nuclear upstart. Just as we have no reason to prefer a first-generation capitalist to a third-generation one, as both exploit us, backing North Korea is simply a different path to the same disaster. Apparently we are meant to choose between leaving nuclear weapons in the hands of a few powerful nations, hoping they will not abuse this privilege, or allowing more nations to have access to such weapons, at the risk of letting a thousand mushroom clouds bloom.

This is madness but there is method to it. Under capitalism, accumulating deadly weapons, and occasionally using them, is perfectly rational behavior. Each nation-state, representing the collective interests of its capitalists (who still keep on fighting each other tooth and nail), is in a state of perpetual conflict, at some level or another, with other nation-states, especially those on its borders. These disagreements tend to revolve around access to resources, trade routes, national boundaries, and the like. In such disputes, obtaining an abundance of military hardware tends to bolster a nation's powers of persuasion, although draining its wealth and resources.

Being aware of the logic behind the arms race is hardly reassuring, however. Once armed to the teeth, there is always a temptation to take the next step and use military force to "resolve" an issue. Trigger fingers get itchy. In the words of Madeleine Albright, "What's the point of having this superb military if we can't use it?". In addition to such hubristic curiosity, wars are sparked for any number of reasons. A weak country might launch a war out of desperation or a leader with a tenuous hold on power might gamble on a military adventure. Or in many cases, each side will show off its military hardware in the hope of intimidating the other, but neither will back down. Boom!

Our fate is in the hands of people who have no real concern for our lives. And the horrors resulting from their calculations and miscalculations are magnified by megatons if nuclear weapons are involved. We need to free ourselves from this death spiral. The problem we face is not simply this or that "dangerous" country, or an "irresponsible" leader, but a lethal capitalist system that has long outlived its usefulness.

population. But food is bought and sold, only exceptionally given and taken. Unless people are the recipients of charity that only nibbles at the problem, those who have to live on a dollar a day or less struggle to survive and often die prematurely.

The capitalist food industry has a number of features that make it part of the problem of starvation and malnutrition, not its solution. The market for food means that only enough is offered for sale that will cover costs and yield an expected profit. Anything more will not be brought to market because it will either remain unsold or push prices down. Hence the butter mountains and wine lakes that were the subject of so much adverse publicity in the 1980s. Small reductions were made, but the excesses are still there. Something similar applies to "set aside" - the logic (only to capitalism) of paying farmers not to grow food that cannot be sold.

Agribusiness is concerned with getting the best price it can for crops and cattle with the least possible expense. Scientists are agreed that artificial hormones injected into animals to fatten them up can be harmful to humans. Laws have been passed to limit but not abolish what amounts to poisoning food for profit. A reasonably healthy workforce is in the interests of employers generally, so we

have consumer protection laws. The consumer who is mainly being protected is the consumer of labour power - the employing class.

When ill people are taken to hospital they expect the food they get there will help them recover. Often not so. Hospitals are among the worst sources of food poisoning. Hygiene standards are lowered by cuts in staff costs. Children are also the victims of a business approach to school meals. According to the *Economist* (20 May) plans to improve school meals are causing havoc. Jamie Oliver's well-intentioned campaign against junk food has made some contracts between schools and the catering industry unsustainable. The schedule of lowly-paid dinner ladies assumes they just open packets and heat up the contents. They don't have time for the labour-intensive preparation of fresh food.

Food in socialism

The classic socialists didn't have a lot to say about food in the new society they advocated. Marx speculated about the future of work, education and abolishing differences between town and country, but famously refused to write recipes for future cookshops. In *News from Nowhere* Morris

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The Science of Morality, the Morality of Science

A friend recently remarked that she had been obliged to take her cat to the vet for the third time this year. When asked if the animal had contracted some nasty virus she replied: "Oh, it's nothing like that. My cat suffers from depression." If the cat had been present to witness the ensuing howls of laughter from the assembled throng, he would no doubt

have gone into terminal decline. And, strange as it may seem, he would be right to deplore such a display of callous human ignorance. For feline depression, as it turns out, is nothing unusual, with eight out of ten vets in one survey reporting cases of stress and depression in animals left alone at home while their owners go out to work (*BBC Online*, 25 August 05).

But it's not just a case of yowling dogs or sulking moggies hungry for bigger portions of human interaction and a side order of self-validation. The social consensus has moved a long way from the days when medieval farmers were told by priests to cut the feet off their runaway pigs since, not having souls, they wouldn't feel anything. The centuries-long debate about animal sentience, more recently informed by a respectable body of research into animal behaviour, has culminated in zoologists and ethologists concluding that not only do many animals feel, they can think. "The whole climate over whether to accept sentience has changed hugely in the last 15 years", Joyce D'Silva of Compassion in World Farming told the BBC back in 2003 (*BBC Online*, 9 May 03). And thinking is only the beginning, argues the CIWF, since there is evidence among social vertebrate species of altruistic behaviour and even a crude understanding of morality.

And if humans respond to these concepts with a milk bowl full of scepticism, it is not surprising, since many scientists are also fighting a rearguard action against them. "Just a couple of decades ago, the words 'animal' and 'cognition' couldn't be mentioned in the same sentence", says primatologist Frans de Waal, "With this fight behind us, emotions have become the new taboo" (*New Scientist*, 14 Oct. In a world where per capita meat production and consumption are probably higher than at any time in recorded history, talk of emotionally aware animals feeling mean or loving or jealous is likely to be greeted with cold disdain. Yet field studies of primates report displays of sympathy, compassion, a clear understanding of what is fair and what is not fair, and instances of group punishment of individuals who disobey rules and inconvenience others. One recent study at Montreal University suggested that even mice may be capable of empathic responses.

The difficulty which this sort of behaviour poses is that modern secular society tends to assume that morality is something which comes from the outside, an abstract intellectual construct established by articulate beings who are capable of imagining all the dire consequences of not knowing right from wrong. At its extreme, among religious groups, morality is located so far outside the species that it does not reside in any known place but in the imaginary mind of an imaginary being in an imaginary universe. But what if morality actually comes from the inside, hard-wired into us? And what if it's not just us? What if other animals share some of the moral and emotional characteristics that we imagine are exclusive to humans, where does that leave our moral justification of ourselves, especially in relation to how we treat them?

It isn't just burger bingers who will start looking guiltily at their Monster Mac. There is a larger philosophical question at stake which affects even scientists, and socialists. What is the point of striving for a value-free science, if we know that in practice it never has existed and in theory never really could anyway? Many have argued vociferously, over issues like the Bomb, genetics, or even stem-cell research, that science without

morality is a dangerous and unhinged form of knowledge, yet the problem with the argument is that it is moral in itself. Thus morality argues in defence of morality. But if we recognise that forms of proto-morality are built-in to higher mammals and primates, perhaps the argument in favour of the moral dimension begins to look less circular and more solidly based.

And what of socialist politics, which is in the habit of highlighting the socio-economic forces which drive changes in society, often to the extent of regarding personal 'lapses' into moral outrage as a form of intellectual flabbiness? Does the case against capitalism and for common ownership and production for use do better with or without a moral dimension? Is it valid to say that capitalism is not only an inefficient and downright destructive social system, it is also plain wrong?

Of course, knowledge would not have progressed as far as it has if moralists still held sway, as they have for most of human history. Morality means different things to different societies, and to base one's strategy for the future upon whatever concept of morality is fashionable today would clearly be a big mistake. Yet if a chimpanzee can show the instinctive compassion of one sentient creature towards the suffering of another sentient creature, perhaps it is not for us to attempt to rise above our basic animal instincts as if they were not really ours but, literally, given by the hand of gods. Perhaps it is just as important to oppose capitalism because it is evil, and not merely because it is 'incorrect'.

No planes, no brains

Another conversation, another friend. This one was on that increasingly tedious subject: did the Americans blow up the Twin Towers themselves? Some people, such as UFOlogists, numerologists, and readers of *Nexus* magazine, foreswear the genuine wonder of scientific discovery and evidence-based knowledge in favour of fantasies, rumours and conspiracy theories conjured up by dedicated charlatans who from time immemorial have always preferred the tall story to the telling fact. The 'no-planers' believe that American missiles crashed into the World Trade Center in 2001, and to explain what we all saw with our own eyes they offer the amazing suggestion that these missiles were cloaked in holographic images of passenger jets. In an article in the *New Statesman* (quoted in the *New York Times*, 7 Sept), Brendan O'Neill describes an interview with two no-planers, ex-secret service agents David Shayler and Annie Machon, as they enthusiastically describe, following the French journalist Thierry Meyssan, author of *9/11: the big lie* (2002), how it definitely couldn't have been a plane that hit the Pentagon. "Just look at the news footage," says Shayler. "You won't see any plane debris on the Pentagon lawn." O'Neill almost chides himself for feeling obliged to print the web address of a site which features photographs of plane wreckage *inside* the Pentagon, at [<http://www.rense.com/general32/phot.htm>]. The no-planers, like the no-landers, by which term Pathfinders herewith dubs those obsessed cranks who insist that the Americans never landed on the moon, are in sore need of a certain cheap and easily available piece of scientific equipment. This invaluable device, known as Occam's Razor, is in fact more of an old saw, which asserts that if several different theories fit all the known facts, then the correct theory is probably the simplest. To answer the no-planers, the simplest explanation for something that looked exactly like a plane flying into the North Tower is that it was a plane flying into the North Tower, and for the no-landers, the difficulty and complexity of an operation to get humans onto the moon would be as nothing to the difficulty and complexity of pretending to do so and then getting away with the pretence for the last thirty-five years. Perhaps the conclusion to draw from all this is that, just as

some animals are more thinking and moral than we care to admit, thus overlapping with us, we humans retain the capacity to be dumb as ducks, thus overlapping with them.

Postscript: Unable to resist, Pathfinders finally succumbed to the primal impulse and clicked on the above link to view the wreckage. The link didn't work. Now that is suspicious...

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a hologram.



Conspiracy?

Dear Editors,

I was astonished that the article "Reflections on a somewhat unusual act of war" (*Socialist Standard*, September) accepted hook, line and sinker, the official version of events to explain the attacks which took place on the 11th September, 2001. The contributor rightly draws attention to the document "Building America's Defenses" where the authors observe that a programme of increased military spending to preserve US global pre-eminence will be politically impossible unless there is "a catastrophic and catalyzing event, like a new Pearl Harbor" but does not make the rather obvious link when this event actually occurs just a year after this document was issued, particularly when there is a mountain of evidence to support the view that the 9/11 attacks were orchestrated by dark and shadowy forces very close to the Bush administration. Just another conspiracy theory? I don't think so.

Space does not permit me to outline many of the seemingly incontrovertible facts which compel one to consider an alternative scenario to that which has been peddled by the capitalist media for so long and now apparently in the *Socialist Standard*. There are many web-sites dealing with this and related subjects, one worthy of a visit being..... www.whatreallyhappened.com/

Allow me to refer briefly to the attacks on the twin towers. That flights 11 and 175 crashed into the towers is beyond dispute; whoever or whatever was responsible is another matter. The official version that the planes were piloted by 'terrorists' simply does not hold water. It is true that two of the

supposed hijackers, Mohammed Atta and Marwan Al-Shehhi, received basic flight training at a private aviation school in Florida but neither men could fly a 2 seater Cessna 150 without an instructor let alone a Boeing 757 or 767. Even an experienced 727 pilot has to take over 70 hours of simulator time just to be able to navigate a 757 or 767.

The twin towers were very strongly constructed and designed to withstand temperatures of up to 2000 degrees Celsius. The core column of each tower comprised 47 huge steel box columns embedded in solid concrete. Each floor was separated from the other floors by thick steel plates to avoid the propagation of any type of fire. Before 9/11, not one steel framed building in the world ever collapsed as the result of any type of fire.

The heat generated by kerosene-based aviation fuel cannot exceed 825 degrees Celsius even in an oxygen-rich environment, so why did the towers collapse? In the basement of the fallen towers, where the support columns were anchored to the bedrock, ponds of molten steel were found several weeks after the attack. What could be responsible for such persistent and residual heat, 70 feet below the surface, in an oxygen-deprived environment? One school of thought is that an exothermic explosive, such as Thermite or Ametol, was placed at the base of each tower. With these substances temperatures above 2500 degrees celsius are often reached so melting of the steel box columns is perfectly feasible. This would explain the many eye-witness reports of explosions heard just before the collapse of each tower. Unexplained tremors were also recorded on a seismograph 21 miles away 14 seconds before the collapse of each building.

Judging by another article which appeared in the same issue of the *Socialist Standard*, the views of Michel Chossudovsky are well respected. His opinion on this subject is unequivocal: "September 11th (was) a hoax. It's the biggest lie in US history".
STEVE PRINCE, London N7

Reply:

On balance the hypothesis that the attacks of September 11, 2001 were organized by Osama Bin Laden's network is more plausible than any other hypothesis that has been put forward. This is not to deny that the exact role played by Bush is open to debate. He may have connived at the attacks by refusing to act on intelligence warnings that he believed, although his inaction could also be attributed to an unwillingness to accept unpleasant news.

Without examining in detail the discrepancies that you see in the Bin Laden hypothesis, it should be noted that many engineers do not share your high opinion of the design of the Twin Towers. See, for instance, the report of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, summarized in *New Scientist* of 6 April, 2005. Thus the steel sheets were strong but very thin; they did not have to reach melting point before starting to give way.

Just what is the alternative explanation that you find more convincing? You refer to orchestration by "dark and shadowy forces very close to the Bush administration". What on earth does this mean? This is the kind of mystical language beloved of those who believe that the world's problems have their origin not in visible institutions but in occult conspiracies ultimately controlled by the

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Patriotism - a politician's refuge

Gordon Brown wants us to "embrace" the Union Jack and to ape the sillier patriots in America by displaying it in our front gardens. But why do they want us to be patriotic?

It was not so long ago - certainly within the tormented, frustrated memories of masses of under-educated children - that we were taught British history began with the arrival in these isles of the Romans. Well at least that made it easier for the people who needed to be known as teachers; rather than work at any seismographic-type research or presentation they need only instruct their famished pupils to open the allocated history book and begin to recite from Page One. A corollary of this careless policy was the assumption that history began in Britain because it was a special place, where special people were bred. Telling those kids they should be grateful to be British elevated them from their hopeless, infested poverty through a belief that to be British was best and that all other peoples of the world should be treated with sympathy - respect could be allowed to intrude only if the others kept to their place in the anthropological order of things. It worked alright - as witnessed by the pupils' daily salute of the classroom portrait of the king and queen.

One whose portrait did not hang in the classroom, but whom the kids were often

reminded of as an icon of British superiority, was Captain Scott the naval officer who led the 1910 expedition to Antarctica. Scott's previous experience there taught him a lot about the perils in setting foot in the place and about the need for detailed, meticulous planning. He was ready to go back and this time, apart from certain scientific operations, there was no doubt about the intention of the expedition. The brochure aimed at potential sponsors put it: "The main object of this expedition is to reach the South Pole, and to secure for the British Empire the honour of that achievement". Scott himself saw it as "...an empire expedition...by a set of men who will represent the hardihood and energy of our race". Implicit in these declarations was that Scott's men would be the first to get to the Pole but when he stopped off at Melbourne on the way to Antarctica he learned that the Norwegian Roald Amundsen would be in competition with him.

Scott

After landing and setting up camp at Cape Evans Scott's men experienced a succession

of emergencies which, while no lives were lost, were a grim foretaste of what was to come. The Pole party - Scott and four others - set out on 1 November 1911. They arrived at the Pole on 16 January 1912, after a journey which had all but drained them of all their resources, to find that Amundsen had got there a month before them; a black flag was there, fixed to a sledge. "Well we have turned our back now on the goal of our ambition with some feelings, and must face our 800 miles of solid dragging - and goodbye to most of the day dreams" wrote Scott. But it turned out to be worse than that. Battered by savage weather and malnourished, the five men were simply unable to get back to Cape Evans. The first to die was Taffy Evans, whose reputation was as one of the strongest in the expedition. He collapsed on 17 February and died quietly in the tent that night. The rest of them pressed on; Titus Oates could hardly walk and Scott's feet were so damaged that he thought amputation was the best he could hope for. They had no choice but to shelter, as best they could, in the tent until the blizzard blew itself out but there was no let up in the weather. It was

Unashamedly patriotic? Gordon Brown chats to Margaret Thatcher who had claimed that 'the Falklands War (far right) transformed the British political scene'



then that Oates went out into the storm to die and the three others - Scott, Wilson and Bowers - stayed to die together, on or about 23 March 1912, eleven miles from the depot where they had left the food which should have saved their lives. "We shall stick it out to the end, but we are weaker, of course, and the end cannot be far" wrote Scott in his diary. Their bodies were found by a search party eight months later.

Decline

That was not the time for any useful appraisal of Scott and his expedition - of the mistakes, the miscalculations, the flawed equipment. That would come later. Meanwhile, on 14 February 1913 there was a short memorial service at St Paul's Cathedral in which, according to the *Daily Sketch*, the keynote was " ... a song of thankfulness for that these sons of our common country had died as they had lived, in the spirit which is the noblest heritage of Englishmen". During the service thousands of captive schoolchildren throughout the country were subjected to "...the true story of five of the bravest and best men who have ever lived on the earth since the world began. You are English boys and girls, and you must often have heard England spoken of as the greatest country in the world, or perhaps you have been told that the British Empire...is the greatest Empire that the world has ever seen..." How many of those schoolchildren, or readers of the *Daily Sketch*, thought back to a year before, to another service at that same cathedral centred on the victims of the Titanic disaster, when the destruction of the unsinkable liner had said something about the decline in British power, as had the humiliation of the British army by the Boers. In the near future was the 1914/18 war, the traumas of the naval battle of Jutland (when a British admiral wondered out loud whether there was "something wrong with our bloody ships") and the slaughter on the first day of the Somme offensive, which re-aligned British military history. Scott's tragedy was cynically used to blanket the reality of what was happening to British capitalism and to its people.

Falklands

On the way southwards to Antarctica lie the Falkland Islands, which hardly anyone apart from stamp collectors had heard of before 1982 when they were briefly occupied by Argentine forces until they were ejected by a British Task Force. This victory in a far away place was remarkable for its effect on the British political scene. Since the end of the war British armed forces had not enjoyed a string of unqualified successes; among their most stressful experiences was the Suez campaign in 1956, which was little

short of humiliation for British interests in the Middle East. At home the 1970s were notable as a time of economic decline, with unemployment reaching three million. In this situation the effects of a British military victory reached far beyond the battle zone, encouraging workers to believe that although they were on the dole there was still something to be said for being able to call themselves British. In 1982 this particular delusion was called the "Falklands Factor". According to Thatcher, "it is no exaggeration to say that the outcome of the Falklands War transformed the British political scene...but the so-called Falklands Factor was real enough. I could feel the impact of the victory wherever I

'the destruction of the (Titanic) had said something about the decline in British power'

went". One of the places she went to was Cheltenham Racecourse, to address a Tory party rally, where she exulted that after the Falklands victory "...we rejoice that Britain has re-kindled that spirit which has fired her for generations past and which today has begun to burn as brightly as before". To encourage the mood and flavour it with a bit of Battle of Britain memories, Vera Lynn was recruited to sing *The White Cliffs of Dover* at the victory parade.

Strikes

But in the same speech Thatcher stated what she meant by the impact of the Falklands factor and the re-kindled spirit. As the troopships returning from the Falklands sailed into Portsmouth harbour a banner hung from the sides of one of them, with advice for striking railway workers: "Call Off The Rail Strike Or We'll Call Down An Air Strike". This referred to a strike called by the National Union of Railwaymen (as it then was) which, Thatcher said, "...just didn't fit - didn't match the spirit of these times..." The strike leaders were "...misunderstanding the new mood of the nation". Another dispute involved the ancillary workers in the NHS; it had been rumbling on for some time but Thatcher was not impressed: "There is a limit to what every employer can afford to pay out in wages"; clearly, the new spirit did not involve any appreciation of the value of low paid workers doing jobs which were vital to the welfare of patients. Partly

through the Falklands Factor, the Tories swept to a massive victory in the 1983 election, which gave Thatcher all the encouragement she needed to take on the trade unions - in particular the miners. It was an example of how patriotic hysteria is used directly against the working class.

Brown

One who has obviously absorbed the necessary lesson in this is Gordon Brown. Addressing the Fabian Society last January, in what was heralded as his first major speech of 2006 - which did not leave us breathless about what else was to come from him before the year was out - he declared that it was time for the "modern" Labour Party and its supporters to be "unashamedly patriotic as, for too long, such feelings have been caricatured as being tied up with right wing beliefs, when in fact they encompass progressive ideas of liberty, fairness and responsibility". He also raved about what he saw as the need to "embrace" the Union Flag and to ape the sillier patriots in America by displaying it in our front gardens. Brown was "absolutely right" about this, said ex-Tory Prime Minister John Major, whose concept of an ideal Britain encompassed warm beer and elderly ladies cycling through country lanes to get to evensong at some ancient village church. It was not known whether Brown was comfortable to receive support from such a quarter; in any case he is probably accustomed by now to dealing with the fact that his party is indistinguishable from the Tories, especially in the matter of showing up as flag-waving, mindless patriots.

Malignant

Patriotism has run through politics like a malignant fault. It did not represent progressive ideas when, in the case of Scott, it was applied to persuade millions of workers that they should endure the terror of the trenches and all the other miseries of that war. The same was true when it was used by the Thatcher government, in the wake of the Falklands victory, to push through measures which damaged the trade unions and so increased the vulnerability of the working class in relation to their employers. It is not a progressive idea now, when the Blair government wields it to justify the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with all they mean in terms of destruction and murder. Enormous damage has been done, throughout the world, by the notion that one country and its people are superior to the others. A truly progressive policy - socialism - recognises the essential unity of the human race and the urgent need to celebrate it by building society on that basis. ■

IVAN



President of the Liberal Democratic Party and Japan's new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

New Prime Minister for Japan: business as usual

Japan has a new Prime Minister who seems eager to foster nationalism. We look at his policies for furthering the interests of the Japanese capitalism.

Koizumi's five and a half year reign as Prime Minister came to a voluntary end in September. He tossed the keys to the official residence to his protege Shinzo Abe after a summer farewell tour that included a pilgrimage to Graceland and a visit to Yasukuni Shrine to pay his respects to the war criminals and their cannon fodder said to spiritually reside there. On September 20, Abe ('ah-bay') was elected President of the Liberal Democratic Party, and six days later the Upper and Lower houses of the Diet approved him as Prime Minister. This quick and easy process, free of public participation and the unpleasant prying from clenched fingers etcetera, must have an envious Gordon Brown shaking his head in disbelief.

Born to rule

A third-generation politician, like so many others in the LDP, Abe has long regarded the top governmental post as his birthright. His grandfather Nobusuke Kishi became Prime Minister in 1957, culminating an amazing political comeback after having served a three-year prison sentence as a 'class-A' war criminal for his wartime role as Minister of Commerce and Industry. The US occupational authorities let Kishi off the hook, enlisting his aid in the fight against commies, but the Japanese people were less forgiving and finally drove him from office in 1960 through massive protests against the US-Japan Security Treaty. Kishi's son-in-law Shintaro Abe, father of Shinzo, was expected to become Prime Minister himself one day. In the early 1980s he rose as high as Foreign Minister, but a corruption

scandal and terminal cancer brought his political career to an end.

Shinzo Abe's own political career got started in 1982, when his father suddenly ordered him to quit his job at Kobe Steel and become his executive assistant at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In 1993 Abe was elected, in typical LDP fashion, to the same Diet seat his father had held until his death two years earlier. It soon became clear that Abe would become Prime Minister one day, and this became an absolute certainty in 2005 when Koizumi appointed him Chief Cabinet Secretary, after he had been the Deputy Chief Cabinet secretary since the Mori administration.

Koizumi helped Abe tremendously by appointing him to head the negotiations with North Korea to return Japanese citizens abducted in the late seventies and early eighties, along with their families. Being at the centre of this highly publicized issue, which has become the *cause celebre* of the rightwing in Japan, has brought Abe great public recognition. He has pointed to his own hard-line stance towards negotiations with North Korea as an example of how he is a 'fighting politician.' In his book *Utsukushii kuni he* (Towards a Beautiful Country), published in July, he defines this term as a politician who 'will act without fear of criticism if it is for the good of the nation and its people.' Abe points to the abduction issue as an example of his fighting skills, suggesting that it took great courage on his part to lead this struggle: 'Many Diet members told me that I had their support, but only a few of them actually took action with me. It's a shame that there were so few 'fighting politicians,' but that's always the way it is in any era.'

Here Abe is laying it on a bit thick, as if it took great courage to latch on to an issue that already had strong public support and media backing.

A hard act to follow

One problem for Abe in his tough-guy role, it must be said, is that he comes across as exactly what he is: a third-generation LDP politician who has obediently followed the path to power his family laid out for him. Indeed, his bland life and career probably account for the need to fancy himself a fighting politician in the first place. Abe is not that different from fellow *dauphin* George W. Bush, who tries to pass himself off as a Texan and prefers the title Commander in Chief to that of President. Unfortunately for Abe, he lacks Koizumi's acting skills. Even though Koizumi is yet another third-generation politician, and a dyed-in-the-wool reactionary at that, he managed to present himself as a rebel within the LDP ranks. He lent his empty statements the air of profundity by delivering them in a scratchy Clint Eastwood voice, with the appropriate pauses inserted to heighten the dramatic impact. Abe, by contrast, speaks in a nasal monotone, without Koizumi's sense of timing. Granted, such superficialities should be irrelevant, but in the demagogic world of bourgeois politics this stuff does matter. The ability of Koizumi to survive for five and a half years was due in no small part to his charisma, whereas his oafish predecessor Yoshiro Mori only lasted a year.

The Japanese public was hoodwinked by Koizumi's vow to either reform the LDP or smash it up in the process. Either option



From left: Abe's grandfather Nobusuke Kishi; members of the LDP at a Shinto ceremony

sounded great to most people, and he enjoyed tremendous support as a result. Repeating the magic word *kaikaku* (reform) on every occasion, Koizumi created the impression that he would revitalise the country. The great thing about the word, as far as he was concerned, is that it could mean different things to different people. To capitalists it clearly suggested his desire to shrink the welfare state, cut corporate taxes, and deregulate the labour market, whereas to anyone not happy with the status quo it seemed that Koizumi was going to attack the entrenched power structure of big capitalists and corrupt bureaucrats. For his LDP colleagues, meanwhile the empty slogan of 'structural reform' seemed just the ticket to prolong their own hold on power.

After starting off at around 80 percent, Koizumi's approval rating did slump a number of times, but thanks to an economic upturn and that magic word of his, he always managed to get back on track around election time. His greatest success was the 2005 general election, which he framed as a simple referendum on his plan to privatise the postal service. By purging the LDP of several members who had opposed this plan, Koizumi made it seem that he was finally carrying through on his promise to shake up the party. The public, if anything, was opposed to privatisation, but the image of Koizumi standing up to 'vested interests' within the LDP *looked* good, and this manoeuvre handed the party a landslide victory.

White House as a model

Abe will be hard-pressed to match the corny but compelling drama of his predecessor, whose term in office is now referred to as 'Koizumi *gekijo*' (theatre), but he may not have to rely on his own poor acting skills. First of all, Abe will face less opposition within his own party thanks to Koizumi having diminished the power of the various LDP factions, which have long functioned as nearly independent political parties. In this sense, Koizumi has made good on his promise to change the LDP, although concentrating power in the hands of the party leader was not exactly what most people had in mind.

At the same time, Abe is seeking to gather more power for the position of Prime Minister, with the US White House as his model. Along with appointing Cabinet members, Abe introduced the new position of 'Advisor to the Prime Minister' for the following five areas: national security, economy and fiscal policy, educational revitalisation, public relations, and the abduction issue. This may be an effort to circumvent the ministerial bureaucracies to better assert his own personal power, in the manner of Nixon or Bush Jr. If this is his intention, there is no guarantee of success,

and the secretary-general of the LDP's Upper House caucus has already warned that this will 'cause disarray over policy-making and split the administration in two.' What is clear, at any rate, is that Abe is keen to gather more dictatorial powers for the Prime Minister than have existed in the past.

The point I wish to make is that despite Abe's questionable skills as a politician, he may survive longer than expected because of the power he possesses and will likely expand if the confrontation with North Korea escalates (as seems likely now that a nuclear weapon has been tested there). If nothing else, Bush's disastrous

'concentrating power in the hands of the party leader was not exactly what most people had in mind'

term in office has shown that an inarticulate and incompetent politician can remain in power given a united party, impotent opposition, and a situation to terrify the public with, and Abe has all of these factors in his favour along with the sort of strong media backing that Bush has enjoyed.

Abe's policies

Assuming that Abe does stick around longer than Mori, what policies does he wish to implement? In many respects, his policies carry on where Koizumi left off. Both claim to champion 'small government,' while being strong believers in the power of the state when it comes to promoting nationalism. For Abe small government above all means reducing the number of government workers and cutting people's health-care and pension benefits. To soften the blow, he promises to retrain workers so as to give them a 'second-chance' in life. One difference in economic policy compared to the previous government is that Abe is making less noise about the need to eliminate unnecessary public works or carry out financial restructuring. His line is that such reforms are impossible without economic growth, and he looks to corporate tax cuts to spur this growth.

Abe's economic policies are not likely to be popular, but he has pinned his hopes on the magical power of nationalism to deflect public frustration. Abe and his LDP cohorts have long claimed that Japan is 'abnormal' because its people lack patriotism. They pin much of the blame for this on the 'pacifist' Constitution and postwar educational system, emphasizing

that both were imposed on Japan by the US. Over the past decade, the LDP has been waging a campaign to steadily blast away at both of these pillars.

Abe hopes to preside over a revision of the Constitution, ridding it of Article Nine, which pledges to 'forever renounce the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.' Last year the LDP issued a draft Constitution, and the following sentence from the Preamble reflects its overall tone and content: 'The Japanese people share a duty to support and defend the nation and society they belong to with love, a sense of responsibility, and mettle.' The changes to the Constitution are ominous, but in some respects the LDP is merely bringing the words into line with reality. The existence of Article Nine did not stop Koizumi from dispatching troops to Iraq (although it did necessitate some verbal gymnastics on his part to argue the action was not unconstitutional). The Left, for its part, merely defends the current 'pacifist' Constitution, instead of seeking the fundamental societal change needed to eliminate the necessity of war. This weak position, which effectively defends the status quo while lacking a clear goal, makes it easy for Abe's LDP to appear principled and realistic by comparison. If the LDP does succeed in changing the Constitution, however, it will have removed a handy fig leaf that conceals the reality of the Japanese state.

The same desire to turn back the clock and dispense with democratic rhetoric can be seen in Abe's goals for educational reform. He intends to advance the effort already under way to introduce new history textbooks that cut out unpleasant facts. Abe and the LDP consider it 'masochistic' to teach students about crimes committed by the state, preferring an account of history that builds up their national pride. Abe has also strongly supported the government effort to force students and teachers to sing the national anthem at school ceremonies and display the national flag.

A dilemma for Abe in championing the rightwing campaign for nationalism, however, is that it has already heightened friction with Japan's supposed ally South Korea and main trading partner China. The influential corporate lobbying group Keidanren called on Koizumi to stop visiting the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in order to improve diplomatic relations. In his first month in office Abe did visit China and South Korea, in an attempt to patch things up, but he seems unlikely to stray too far from his far-right allies. Abe has nationalists to thank for his quick rise to power, and nationalism is the best card he has to hold on to his own position and keep the LDP (and the capitalist class) in power. ■

MS

Anarchism in



We review a new book by an anarchist on what anarchists in Britain think and do today.

There are anarchists and anarchists. Bomb-throwers and pacifists, syndicalists and communists, primitivists and egoists, even anarcho-capitalists. Knowing to our cost that the same can be said of "socialists", we must be careful not to use what one group who call themselves anarchists think as typical of what anyone who calls themselves one does.

Benjamin Franks's book, *Rebel Alliances: The means and ends of contemporary British anarchists* (AK Press, £15), deals with anarchist groups today who he calls "class struggle anarchists". Which means we can ignore here the individualists and the anarcho-capitalists, but even so the groups left still have different approaches, especially as, for some reason, Franks includes "council communists" and "autonomist Marxists" among them.

He lists four criteria for being considered a "class struggle anarchist".

1. "A complete rejection of capitalism and the market economy".
2. "An egalitarian concern for the interests and freedoms of others as part of creating non-hierarchical social relations."
3. "A complete rejection of state power and other quasi-state mediating forces".
4. "A recognition that means have to prefigure ends".

Franks places emphasis on the fourth and uses it to judge the principles, organisational forms and activities of "contemporary British anarchists", in particular Class War, the Anarchist (formerly Anarchist Communist) Federation

and the Solidarity Federation (direct descendant of the old Syndicalist Workers Federation). The people around the best known anarchist publication, *Freedom*, are excluded as "liberal anarchists".

Prefiguring future society

We, too, hold that the means have to prefigure the end but reached this conclusion from a quite different starting point: that of democracy in the proper sense. Democracy means, literally, the rule or power of the people, i.e. popular participation in decision-making. It allows various ways of reaching a decision but, in the end, if consensus cannot be obtained, it has to come to a vote; in which case the majority view prevails. Democracy does not mean that all decisions have to be made at general assemblies of all concerned or by referendum; it is compatible with certain decisions being delegated to committees and councils as long as the members of these bodies are responsible to those who (s)elect them.

Socialism is a society based on the common ownership of the means of life but, since something cannot be said to be commonly owned if some have a privileged or exclusive say in how it is used, common ownership means that every member of society has to have an equal say. If there wasn't such democratic control there wouldn't be common ownership, so there wouldn't be socialism.

Democratic control is not an optional extra of socialism. It is its very essence. This being so, socialism cannot be imposed against the will or without the consent and participation of the (vast) majority. It simply cannot be established for the majority by some vanguard or enlightened minority. That is our case against all forms of Leninism. The socialist revolution can only be democratic, in the sense of both being what the majority of people want and of being carried out by democratic methods of organisation and action. No minority revolution can lead to socialism, not even one that destroys the state (our case against certain anarchists) - and of course socialism will involve the disappearance of the state as a coercive institution serving the interests of a minority. Hence our conclusion that the movement to establish socialism, and the methods it employs, must "prefigure" the democratic nature of socialism.

Traditionally, anarchists have rejected democracy as an organising principle (not just the democratic state but any form of democratic organisation). The early British anarchists that William Morris met in the



Socialist League in the 1880s denounced democracy as "the tyranny of the majority" (which Morris regarded as an absurd position). The anarchists who controlled the pre-WWI CGT union federation in France favoured the activities of an "active minority". Emma Goldman in *Anarchism and Other Essays* declared, in an essay entitled "Minorities versus Majorities", that "the living, vital truth of social and economic well-being will become a reality only through the zeal, courage, the non-compromising determination of intelligent minorities, and not through the mass" (see <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/Writings/Anarchism/minorities.html>). As the *Socialist Standard* commented on this in September 1924: "such views mean that the great body of the people will depend upon the kindness and wisdom of the Anarchist intellectuals to guide and mother us".

It is only in recent years that some anarchists have come to embrace democracy as an organising principle, mainly under the influence of industrial unionists and council communists (who claimed rather to be Marxists). Still, better late than never. But even now most anarchists have difficulty in justifying why someone should conform to a majority decision that he or she doesn't agree with; they still seem to think that no external decision can bind the "sovereign individual" of individualist anarchism (and bourgeois ideology). One group which did accept binding majority decisions - the now defunct Anarchist Workers Group in the late 80s - was denounced by the others, and again by Franks in this book, as crypto-Leninists.

This same ideology is reflected in the difficulty anarchist groups have with the concept of "representation". What they call "representative democracy" (whether in the



Britain today



state or generally) is rejected on the grounds that no group can be "represented" by anyone and that any "representative" inevitably stands in a hierarchical relationship with the group they claim to represent. But why can't a group (s)elect some of their number to represent them - unless you think that the supposed "sovereign individuals" who make up the group cannot sign away their right to speak and act for themselves?

Since even anarchists admit that not all decisions can be made by general assemblies or referendum, they get round this by saying that "delegation" is acceptable. But any attempted distinction between "representative" (bad) and "delegate" (good) is just playing with words. This is not to say that what is called "representative democracy" in relation to the capitalist state is ideal. Far from it, even in the Swiss cantons and US States and cities where it is supplemented by the right of initiative (of a certain number of citizens to propose laws and call referendums) and the right to recall (unelect) a representative.

State elections

Capitalist democracy is not a participatory democracy, which a genuine democracy has to be. In practice the people generally elect to central legislative assemblies and local councils professional politicians who they merely vote for and then let them get on with the job. In other words, the electors abdicate their responsibility to keep any eye on their representatives, giving them a free hand to do what the operation of capitalism demands. But that's as much the fault of the electors as of their representatives, or rather it is a reflection of their low level of democratic consciousness. It can't be blamed on the principle of representation as such.

There is no reason in principle why, with a heightened democratic consciousness (such as would accompany the spread of socialist ideas), even representatives sent to state bodies could not be subject - while the state lasts - to democratic control by those who sent them there. The only arguments that anarchists have ever been able to put against this are that "power corrupts" and that this practice is not allowed by the constitution. But if power inevitably corrupts why does this not apply also in non-parliamentary elected bodies such as syndicalist union committees or workers councils?

Somewhat surprisingly, Franks does not condemn out of hand anarchist

participation in state elections. Discussing Class War's standing of a candidate in a parliamentary by-election in 1988 he says that there could be occasions when this could be done as long it is done in a way that doesn't "reaffirm representative democracy", as he claims we do when we stand candidates. We would reply that when we stand candidates we do "prefigure" the genuinely democratic nature of future socialist society in that our candidates do not stand as leaders or offering to do anything for people but merely as potential delegates of those who want socialism, as mere "messenger boys (and girls)" pledged, if elected, to submit to the democratic control of those who voted them in. We suspect, however, that in not completely ruling out any participation in state elections Franks will be regarded by other anarchists as having conceded far too much.

The book - despite the drawback of having been originally written as a university thesis - does give a useful and comprehensive view of the discussions that have gone on in anarchist circles in recent years. It is interesting to note that some of these have been paralleled by discussions within our party, for instance, whether the revolution is to be a class or a non-class affair, and to what extent can community struggles outside the workplace be assimilated to struggles at the point of production. (For the record, our view is that

the revolution has to be the work of the working class, but as the working class understood not as just manual industrial workers but as anyone forced to work for a wage or salary irrespective of the job they do, i.e. most people today; and that non-workplace struggles such as tenants associations and claimants' unions are as legitimate defensive struggles as the trade union struggle over wages and working conditions.)

On the other subjects which divide contemporary anarchists, we would side with the syndicalists in saying that economic exploitation is primary, but with the anarcho-communists in saying that future society will involve community-based administrative councils and not exclusively industry-based ones. We oppose the blanket rejection of the existing trade unions as proposed by the ACF (and the council communists). And we would agree with statements quoted by Franks (and have said the same thing many times ourselves) that "we exist not as something separate from the working class, not as some leadership for others to follow, but as part of the working class working for our own liberation" (Subversion) and "to the Left the working class are there to be ordered about because we are too thick to think for ourselves" (Class War).

In Franks's scheme, we would be classified as a group practising "propaganda by word" with occasional forays into "constitutional activity" in the form of participation in elections. What we don't do - and which all the anarchist groups engage in - is to participate, as a group, in "micropolitics", local single-issue campaigns. We don't necessarily dismiss all such campaigns as entirely useless but think it best to leave them up to the people directly concerned, merely advising them (if asked) to organise and conduct themselves democratically, without leaders and without outside interference from Leninist (and, indeed, anarchist) groups. As a group composed of people who have come together because we want socialism, we see our group's task as to concentrate on spreading socialist ideas. ■

ADAM BUICK



Upton Sinclair and *The Jungle*

The centenary of an anti-capitalist classic.

A hundred years ago, in the summer of 1906, the American author Upton Sinclair completed a novel called *The Jungle*. The work, a 'muckraking' account of labour and unsanitary conditions in the Chicago stockyards, quickly established itself as a classic denunciation of industrial capitalism and one of the most revolutionary novels of the age.

Originally commissioned for serialisation by the radical American journal *Appeal to Reason*, *The Jungle* catapulted Sinclair to international prominence and placed him at centre of a radical social movement that sought to resist the acceleration of monopoly capitalism during the 'Progressive Era' in early twentieth century America. The dominant theme of this movement was the attempt, through works of literature, to arouse resistance to the escalating dominance of a political and economic elite whose control over the media stifled public awareness, debate, and activism.

The Jungle was written in a turbulent age. When Theodore Roosevelt became President in 1901, America was a country deeply divided by the extremes of wealth and poverty. The period since the Civil War had been overshadowed by the rapid development of capitalism and an ebb and flow in the workers' bitter struggle to organise the defence of working conditions against the onslaught of capital. After the mass strike of 1877, employers' repression of labour was aided by the courts and the enactment of anti-union conspiracy laws as well as the revival of state militias (later to be renamed the National Guard) as the instrument to break strikes.

Open class warfare intensified after the 1886 Haymarket incident, when police attacked a Chicago demonstration demanding the 8-hour working day. In the resulting chaos a bomb was thrown, police and protesters were killed, and the leaders of the radical groups involved arrested, charged and seven of their number subsequently executed for murder. The newspapers whipped up public hysteria against the labour movement and the violent



The Haymarket - 1886 - one of the most notorious incidents in American labour history

suppression of strikes by armed troops and private armies became widespread across America. Blacklisting, strike-breaking, the murder of trade unionists and police harassment were orchestrated by the business and political elite to prevent the formation of a mass working class organisation. The offices of trade unions and radical groups were often raided and ransacked, leaders arrested, printing presses destroyed and armed vigilante groups were organised by business to break-up meetings.

The Jungle captured the brutality of the era and not unexpectedly Sinclair had difficulty finding a publisher for his devastating novel. An employee at the publishers Macmillan wrote, "I advise without hesitation and unreservedly against the publication of this book which is gloom and horror unrelieved. One feels that what is at the bottom of his fierceness is not nearly so much desire to help the poor as hatred of the rich." Undaunted, Sinclair self-published and the novel immediately caused uproar, but not in the way he had hoped.

Sinclair's intention in writing the novel had been to draw attention to the appalling conditions and squalor of wage-labourers under capitalism by unfolding the tragedy of his central character, Jurgis Rudkus, a Lithuanian immigrant working in the meat packing houses of Packingtown, a suburb of Chicago. But his objective was lost on the public, overshadowed by his descriptions of the unsanitary conditions and inadequate regulation in the meat processing plants. Creating a fear that public indignation would lead to a collapse in confidence and hence in the profits of the Beef Trusts, the nauseating detail exposed in *The Jungle* prompted instead the intervention of President Roosevelt and the subsequent passage of the Meat Inspection Act of 1906. Sinclair would later lament, "I aimed for their hearts, and hit their stomachs."

Widely read

Although failing to accomplish his immediate goal, Sinclair remained a highly acclaimed and widely read author, whose other works included *King Coal* (1917) and *The Profits of Religion* (1918). But in 1919 he completed *The Brass Check*, which he considered "the most important and most dangerous book I have ever written" (8th edition 1920, p. 429.). The work was a devastating critique of the contradiction of capitalist newspaper production for profit and a so-called "free press." It accused American journalism of being a class institution serving the rich in which "Politics, Journalism, and Big Business work hand in hand for the hoodwinking of the public and the plundering of labour." (*The Brass Check*, p.153). In 1942 he wrote *Dragon's Teeth*, a novel on the rise of Nazism that won him the 1945 Pulitzer Prize. A prodigious writer, he completed, ninety-two books and twenty-nine pamphlets attacking all aspects of social injustice until his death in 1968 at the age of 90.

But for all Sinclair's criticism of the capitalist economic system, he naively clung to the belief that capitalism could be reformed and made to organise in the interests of the working class. He held a deep 'moralistic' view that capitalism could be 'tamed' by 'social justice' and was strongly influenced by the 'reformism' propagated by the Socialist Party of America (established in 1901) which he had joined in 1902. The Socialist Party of America regarded its immediate task as building a mass party to ameliorate the excesses of capitalism and consequently attracted members with a wide variety of reformist opinions.

Like all parties of capitalism that have revolutionary pretensions, the Socialist Party of America was never able to offer a unified response to a number of important questions and in the course of the next 40 years would be torn apart. In the early years



Burning railyard during the 1877 strike

the membership held conflicting views on trade unionism, (in particular its relationship with the American Federation of Labour and the IWW) entry into the War, the social reforms of the 'Progressive Era' under Woodrow Wilson's administration and the 1917 Russian Revolution.

In the 1930s the Party would split over its response to Stalinism and the rise of Fascism in Europe. But it was the government's legislation to shore up American capitalism under Roosevelt's New Deal, that finally sapped the Party's remaining support and by 1937 the Socialist Party of America was a spent force. The confusion sown by Party propaganda caused many workers to regard the legislation of the New Deal as the embodiment of the "socialistic" principles that seemed to overlap with the Party's own "immediate demands" for social reform.

Sinclair too must take a share of the responsibility for misguiding the American working class. When America entered the First World War he wrote an article in the radical journal *The Masses*, that argued that America should enter the war to defeat anti-democratic German militarism and, together with others including Charles Edward Russell and A. M. Simons, resigned his Party membership in protest against the Party's anti-war position. He wrote, "If Germany be allowed to win this war - then we in America shall have to drop every other activity and devote the next twenty or thirty years to preparing for a last-ditch defence of the democratic principle."

Woodrow's Wilson's decision to enter the war and its aftermath effectively crushed the American radical labour movement. The Espionage Act of 1917 legitimised government repression by banning radical journals, imposing crippling fines and exposing labour leaders to beatings and arrests. Eugene Debs, once leader of the Socialist Party of America, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment after making his famous anti-war speech in Canton, Ohio in 1918. In 1927 Sinclair wrote an article for *The Nation* in which he recanted his view and conceded that his earlier stance on the First World War had been incorrect.

Ran for Governor

In the 1920s Sinclair, a firm supporter of Prohibition, helped to establish the Californian chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and after rejoining the Socialist Party of America he became their unsuccessful candidate for governor of California in 1926. In 1934 he again stood for governor but this time he abandoned his own party and entered the Democratic Party Primary, winning on a platform known as EPIC (End Poverty in California). In his election proclamation Sinclair maintained that capitalism had gone into permanent crisis and proposed the utopian establishment of a co-operative system for America's ten million unemployed, "producing everything which they themselves consume and exchanging those goods among themselves by a method of barter, using warehouse receipts or labour certificates." (*The*

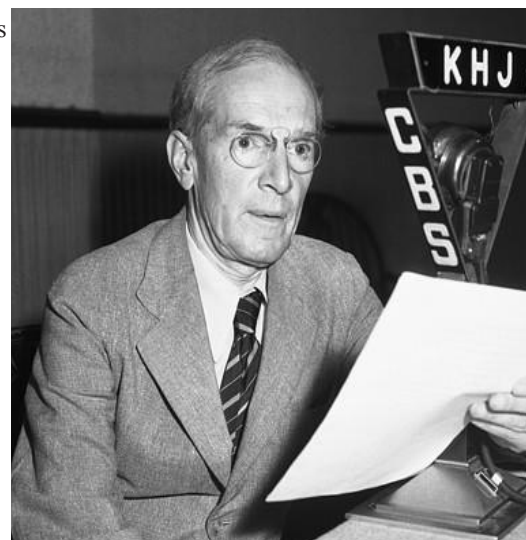
Literary Digest, October 13, 1934).

Although he lost the election, Sinclair received considerable support, polling over 879,000 votes (37 percent) but his candidature split both the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party of America. Many of his colleagues were appalled by his action, and Sinclair's son David accused him of "insane opportunism," to which Sinclair mildly replied that he was just trying to "educate" the public. After his defeat Sinclair largely abandoned EPIC and returned to his writing.

Sinclair, like the political party he supported, was riddled with contradictions. A scathing critic of capitalism he never once demanded its abolition, preferring instead to compromise with capitalism and pursue abstract notions of 'social justice'. He claimed to be a socialist and yet for much of his life was a member of a political party that would only have administered the capitalist system. He supported America's entry into the war - and the murder of American workers - while acknowledging that the war had nothing to do with the American working class. He was prepared to make alliances with the capitalist organisations including the Democratic Party despite believing that, in the American two party system, elections were when people "go to the polls and cast their ballots for either one of the candidates of their exploiters." (*The Brass Check*, p.222.) He claimed to be a friend of the working class but would occasionally display racist and nationalistic tendencies in his works.

Sinclair displayed immense talent when he wrote *The Jungle*. The novel brought him fame and position of influence but his naivety and muddled thinking in the political sphere did little to advance the cause of workers in America. ■

STEVE
TROTT



Cooking the Books (1)

Abnormal behaviour

The Bank of France is worried. Capitalist enterprises, it seems, are not behaving normally.

In an article entitled "*Is the investment behaviour of enterprises 'normal'?*" in the August issue of its Bulletin (www.banque-france.fr/fr/publications/telechar/bulletin/152focus.pdf), the Bank notes that enterprises in the G7 countries (US, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Canada) are registering "very strong profitability" and that "as a percentage of GDP enterprise profits are at their highest level for decades", but that an unusually high proportion of these profits are not being reinvested in production. Some (most in fact) are of course but what is not normal, according to the Bank, is that in 2005 the enterprise sector of the economy was a net lender to other sectors, which is "disconcerting as one would normally expect enterprises to be in general net borrowers" (i.e., to be borrowing money to invest in production), adding "in fact this has always been the case up till now" and that "it is particularly

surprising to note that investment is not more dynamic when long-term real rates of interest are at their historical lowest level".

Two questions arise. If they are not investing enough, what are enterprises doing with the extra profits? And, more fundamentally, why are they not investing them?

The Bank identifies a number of ways in which enterprises are using the profits that they are not investing. First, holding them as liquid assets (placed on financial markets in forms that can be readily be converted into cash): "liquid assets represent 9 percent of their total assets, a level that is difficult to explain by any historical precedent or traditional economic approach". Second, distributing them to shareholders. Third, spending them on taking over other enterprises.

As to why, the Bank offers two scenarios. In the "optimistic" one, the current underaccumulation of physical assets is seen as the other side of the coin to the overaccumulation that took place in the 1990s; in other words, as one phase of the capitalist business cycle; sooner or later the profit hoards will disappear as they are absorbed by rising wages and interest rates when the cycle moves on to its next phase.

In the "less optimistic" scenario, the unusually high level of uninvested profits is seen as the result of investment in physical assets being more risky than placing the money on financial markets. The Bank lists three reasons as to why investment is currently regarded as being too risky: geopolitical uncertainties, anticipated inevitable exchange rate adjustments, and the threat of protectionism.

At the moment, the Bank says, this can only be conjecture, but:

"A situation where the risk premiums of physical assets are very different from those of financial assets cannot go on for ever. In the long term financial assets only reflect an underlying 'real' economic reality. These two categories of risk premium can in time only converge".

The Bank says that it is "of the greatest importance for the world economy that this process [of convergence] should take place in an orderly manner" (i. e., without a financial crash and its consequences), but doesn't seem too optimistic that it will. It might of course. We shall see. In any event, what sort of economic system is it in which it is normal to have to rely on whether or not a big enough profit can be made to get things produced?



'Terror in our schools

For the media, reports of bad behaviour, assaults, stabbings, teenage drinking, attacks on the elderly and the like are daily fare.

This was the headline covering the front page story in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 12 August. The story was under the by-line of Linda McKee but the editor obviously thought it deserved greater exposure because the same story in almost the same words and sensational statistics appeared again on page 7 under the name of Dan McGinn.

We learnt from a screaming sub-heading that 1,000 pupils in Northern Ireland had been suspended from school for attacking staff. The body of the news item reduced the stridency of the headline by telling us that the figure of 1,000 was for a period of three years and that only 14 of the cases concerned merited expulsion. Statistically the article could have said that less than 0.047 per cent of pupils in Northern Ireland were accused of abusive behaviour towards teachers every year and between four and five of the complaints on each of the three years were serious enough to merit expulsion. The truth, however, has less impact than the sensational and it is the sensational that sells newspapers and makes profits for the self-interested moguls whose papers have such an important input into the formation of our opinions.

In this case the front page author was not only skilled in sensationalising but she was able to tell her readers how to resolve the problem. She tells us that the dreadful happenings she depicts happened 'without proper punishments' leading us to the assumption that punishment - by definition an act of violence - is the answer to the problem of violence.

Influenced youth culture

For the media, reports of bad behaviour, assaults, stabbings, teenage drinking, attacks on the elderly and the like are daily fare. Good behaviour is rarely news, perhaps because it is much more common than the stuff the press reports and, indeed, is what the public regard as normal despite frenetic media persuasion to the contrary.

That said, it is true that violence against the aged, alcohol- and drug-induced violence and muggings have become unsavoury aspects of social concern. Now there are burglar alarms where often people were careless about locking their doors at night and a night-time fear of errant behaviour often imposes a curfew on the elderly and the timid in many town and city centres.

We have to examine the causes of these patterns of behaviour against the background of the present way of life and to show that they are part of the myriad problems for which capitalism has no answer and another reason for considering the rational socialist alternative to the way we live.

Capitalism created a need for those employed in the production and distribution of its goods and services to possess a basic knowledge of what became known as the Three R's: reading, writing and arithmetic. Accordingly the capitalist state institutionalised basic education as a legal requirement. But at that stage education beyond the basic was all the system required of working class children. 'Their betters', the scions of the rich, could have their educational horizons widened at universities to enrich their lives and prepare them as 'leaders' of society. Giving the working class the ability to read, however, opened the floodgates of knowledge and speeded the debunking of many of the myths on which religious morality is based.

Demand of the labour market

It is probably true to say that the capitalist political administration in its urgency to provide a more technically efficient labour force now robs the young of

an important segment of childhood. Children are forced into the educational process at a younger age and within a few years their educational apprenticeship into the competitive demands of the labour market means that they are working at school and at home for a greater part of each day than those actually at work.

Now the schools have become educational factories, with harassed teachers themselves under compulsion to justify capitalism's investment in what is still quaintly referred to as education and pupils induced to sacrifice their vital formative years in the hope that it will make them more competitive - by definition more aggressive and with fewer social concerns - in the hard world of capitalism.

Because education in capitalism is about creating the most efficient varieties of wage slaves those deemed by early audit to be a poor educational investment are rejected and stigmatised as failures. Further attendance at school in these cases often becomes a form of punishment and it is easy to see how young people, rejected and labelled failures, can build antagonisms towards teachers, schools and towards the society that has branded them.

The effect of New Labour's charges on third-level education - the mountains of debt now facing working class students who earned the right to compete for the more specialised jobs - has not yet worked its way through the system. It is not hard, however to appreciate the disillusion and alienation of a qualified teacher, for example, with a debt of £20,000 who can't get a job and finds him- or herself filling supermarket shelves.

In the wider field, news true and false is now an intensive, heavily-capitalised, industry pumping out all sorts of information twenty-four hours of every day while concealing anything that might reveal the real cause of most of the news that is reported. Without exception, all the major news media, print and electronic, promote the patriotic fervour that is so utterly meaningless and shallow; even commercialised sport, art, culture or any other human activity is used as a conduit to an aggressive xenophobic competitiveness that blights understanding between peoples. Hence, we get things like football hooliganism, so roundly condemned by those who do most to promote it.

Political clout

The search for the news commodity is borderless and inexorable: media lies and hype make politicians celebrities just as media lies and truth can strip them and castigate them when there's kudos in a story or when they threaten some interest of the parasites who own a section of the news media. We hear how the results of a general election can be determined by the owner of a rag like the *Sun* and how governmental consideration is given to policies that might not find sympathy with some media mogul with more political clout than a million voters.

We are well, if not accurately informed; however disinterested we might be we cannot escape the knowledge that social democracy does not exist and our political democracy is at the level where political parties do not win elections; their opponents simply lose them while millions do not vote because they have abandoned the idea that their votes are of any real value.

Meanwhile, the wars go on somewhere every day; so does the competitive brutality of the marketplace, its money shuffling, and corporate swindling and corruption. The disgusting self-interest of leading politicians and public figures the swingeing poverty of social services and the application of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders to the problem of errant youth, visionless, disillusioned, often intellectually deprived and now, under New Labour, left to the tender mercies of the police. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE



The Axis against evil

The US is generally perceived as the central pillar of capitalism, yet US hegemony is increasingly losing favour with people around the world.

The double standards operated by the US are plain for all to see: the US has a vast arsenal of nuclear weapons, yet will not allow Iran and North Korea to develop their own. The lies about Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction were followed by a brutal war there, with ever-increasing numbers of casualties. Moreover, the US uncritically supports Israel, and at the time of the recent invasion of Lebanon the US actively delayed condemning Israel's actions in the hope of giving them time enough to destroy Hezbollah. Behind all this lies the need to control oil supplies. After 9/11, the new Patriot Act and the heightened profile of Homeland Security resulted in dissenters at home being portrayed as traitors.

Bush and co propagate a picture of "us and them", "us" being the US and its allies and friends and "them" being anyone remotely in opposition to their idea of world order. But who, more particularly are "us and them"?

According to received opinion and Cold War propaganda it used to be simple. It was "us", the capitalists who loved freedom and "them", the Communists (USSR), who were under state control. With the fall of the USSR the Cold War was over and a new threat had to be manufactured to fill the gap. So now

"them" is the Axis of Evil, terrorists and dissenters, all standing against "democracy" and therefore against the "free" market.

However, the Axis of Evil or what's left of it - Iran, Syria, Sudan, North Korea - aren't in opposition to capitalism. Their rulers are merely in favour of running it their own way, in their own interests, which appear to be directly opposed to the wishes of the US. It is also a challenge that Iran and Syria are believed to sponsor terrorism, i.e. have a different view of and vision for the Middle East. External dissenters will have pressure brought to bear by the various trade organisations using economic sticks and carrots, by threatened withdrawal of aid and even by the (deliberately) weakened UN.

Another "them"

The newest "them" is of a different order, spreading across Central and South America, including the Zapatistas of Mexico; Bolivia which refused to privatise gas and water and now has Evo Morales pushing the social agenda further; Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, the Bolivarian circles and the new People's Constitution; Argentina and the Unemployed Workers' Movement; Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement. All these reject the idea of being underdogs in a US-dominated world order.

These movements do not aim at the overthrow of capitalism but they are standing together against its symbols in the shape of the WTO, IMF, World Bank, and transnational corporations. Add to these movements the anti-globalisation, anti-capitalist forums, which have led, for instance, to US students fighting to ban Coca Cola from a growing number of

campuses. This is because in certain countries unionised workers have been ditched and even murdered, and in India village water has been seriously contaminated by Coca Cola bottling plants. Another example is the ongoing "Nestles Kills Babies" campaign against the policy of promoting baby formula mixed with (often contaminated) water in favour of mother's milk. The "Fair Trade" movement attempts to provide more than a subsistence wage to farmers around the world and give a guaranteed price even when prices on the world market fluctuate.

World poverty is the subject of a myriad of movements present at the World Social Forum, like the Brazilian Landless Movement and the anti-Big Pharma Brigade which campaigns against the big pharmaceutical companies which lock poor farmers into the buying their seeds, fertiliser and insecticides. Other well-known campaigns are those such as are fronted by celebrities like Geldof, Bono and Clinton. These latter campaigns raise the profile in a large part of the world with many people who would otherwise remain ignorant of the problems, widening awareness, interest and questioning

The US home front

On the home front in the US divisions are widening too. It's one year after the destruction and loss of life from Hurricane Katrina when most of the residents who fled the destruction are still living "in exile" with little opportunity to get back home and scant prospect of work. Almost half of the demolition and construction workers in the area are now imported "Latinos" rather than the formerly resident "Afro-Americans" because, surprise, surprise, the contractors find the immigrants more easily

continued on page 18



Cooking the Books (2)

Statistical Errors

There is a silly argument going on at the moment between the government and an organisation called

Migrationwatch which favours tougher controls on immigration. The government claims that people born abroad working in the UK have caused "a small but positive increase to gross domestic product per capita". Migrationwatch claims the opposite and argues that in future only immigrants whose work contribution raises GDP per head should be allowed in.

GDP per head, i.e., total annual production of goods and services divided by total population, is simply a statistic; it doesn't cause anything but is a measure or reflection of a situation caused by real facts. If GDP per head falls because GDP has fallen or has remained unchanged while population has gone up this might indicate a deterioration in general living standards (though even then most people could be unaffected since a fall in GDP per head does not mean that everybody is worse off any more than a rise means everybody is better off). But GDP per head is not falling but rising. So, what the

government and Migrationwatch are arguing about is the hypothetical question of whether it would have risen faster if there had been fewer immigrants.

But how do you measure what a worker contributes to GDP, i.e., to total annual production? Migrationwatch explicitly, and the government implicitly, assume that a worker contributes only the equivalent of their wages. As Migrationwatch argue in a recent "research paper":

"In the calendar year 2003 the UK's GDP was £1.099 billion. £613 billion of this amount was 'compensation of employees'. So, apportioning this amount of GDP generated by employment earnings amongst the working population of 27.6 million people this gives average earnings per worker of £22,200 a year" ("Selection criteria for immigrant workers", www.migrationwatch.org).

But if workers produced only £613 billion of a total production of £1,099 billion who produced the rest? The same statistics show that the rest is made up of profits (25 percent), "mixed income", i.e., the profits and the labour contribution of the self-employed, (6 percent), and the difference between taxes and subsidies.

Since work is the only possible source of new wealth, a more accurate calculation would be to divide £1,099 billion by the working population; which

gives a contribution of £39,800 per worker. This would reflect the fact that all productive workers, whether native-born or born abroad, contribute to GDP considerably more than their earnings but what they produce above this goes as profits to their employers.

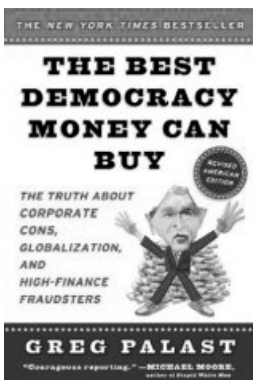
This rather demolishes Migrationwatch's convoluted calculations to reach the conclusion that "a worker must earn about £27,000 a year to make, on average, a positive contribution to GDP per head" and that only migrants earning this or more should be allowed in.

Migrationwatch's stigmatising of any worker, native-born ones too, earning less than £27,000 as a burden since they contribute less to GDP than average so dragging GDP per head down is just plain ridiculous. As GDP per head is an average there will always be some above and some below it. Migrationwatch's proposal to raise the average by eliminating some of those below it would achieve this but it would reduce GDP (since even Migrationwatch admits that any immigrant who works contributes something to GDP). A bit like cutting off your nose to spite your face. But then, Migrationwatch is only deploying apparently sophisticated statistical arguments to back up its already-decided policy of "keep the riff-raff out".

Hitting them where it hurts

John Perkins: *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. Ebury £7.99.

Greg Palast: *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*. Robinson £7.99.



An economic hit man or EHM is a person who works for a bank or international finance house. Their job is to organise loans to developing countries, to help with infrastructure projects such as power plants, roads or airports. But it is a condition of these

loans that companies from the country doing the lending have to undertake the building. The money, therefore, simply moves from a bank to an engineering company. But the recipient country of course has to pay it all back, with interest. If it defaults, the lending country can impose controls such as installing military bases or gaining access to raw materials.

John Perkins worked as an EHM for an American company called Chas. T. Main, but he eventually realised the effects his work was having and so he got out. His book recounts his experiences and how he came to see through what he was doing, and so gives an interesting insider's account of how US control over the Third World is established and maintained. Ecuador, for instance, was loaned billions of dollars, but in thirty years its official poverty level grew to 70 percent and its public debt to \$16 billion. Nearly half of its national budget is devoted just to paying off its debts.

Saudi Arabia was brought under US influence, partly to ensure there would be no repetition of the 1973-4 oil embargo. The Saudi rulers used their petrodollars to buy US government securities, and the interest on these paid US companies to build infrastructure projects, which were then operated by cheap labour imported from other Middle Eastern or Islamic countries. But on Perkins' account, Saddam Hussein refused to play the EHM game, thus bringing the wrath of the US down on him. He further claims that Venezuela was saved from invasion simply because the US could not take on that country as well as Iraq and Afghanistan at the same time.

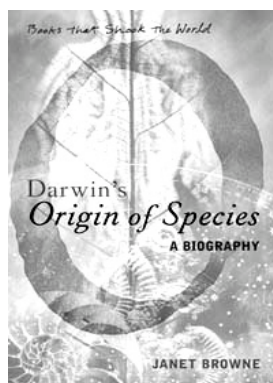
The back cover of *Confessions* has a laudatory quote from Greg Palast, whose own book (first published in 2002) is a wide-ranging look at the links between government and big business. He quotes an IMF report from 2000 which reviewed the impact of globalisation and concluded that "in the recent decades, nearly one-fifth of the world population has regressed".

One of Palast's particular concern is privatisation, which he claims has led to huge profits for some and worsening services for the many. Another is shared with Perkins, that of how the Third World is controlled and kept in a subordinate position by the most powerful capitalist companies. In 2001, for instance, Argentina was subjected to IMF-imposed austerity measures that led to soaring unemployment

and a dramatic fall-off in industrial production. In 1998 Brazil was loaned billions of dollars and at the same time forced to sell its power companies: British Gas bought the São Paulo Gas Company for a song. New Labour, with Blair and Mandelson leading the way, were instrumental in helping US and UK companies get their hands on Brazilian companies and raw materials. The fate of Allende in Chile, overthrown by a CIA coup, was sealed because he refused to pay compensation to American companies whose property he had expropriated.

Palast also has a forceful chapter on how George W Bush supposedly stole the 2000 presidential election. He's also good on the emptiness of Blair's Labour, which is driven by ambition rather than any convictions. But it's the picture of how corporations (what Perkins calls the corporatocracy) go about the work of making over the world in their own image that is conveyed memorably by both these volumes. **PB**

***Darwin's Origin of Species* by Janet Browne. Atlantic Books, 2006**



In a New York Times poll in November 2004, 55 percent of respondents agreed that God had created human beings in their present form. Clearly the Darwinian revolution has some way to go. Darwin's revolutionary

work was first published in November 1859 with the full title: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. And yet the theory of evolution could have been known under a different name. In the previous year the naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace had sent Darwin an essay in which he set out the theory of evolution by natural selection. Darwin's friends hurriedly arranged for both works to be published at the same time, so the theory should really be known as the Wallace-Darwin theory, if not the Wallace theory of evolution. In any event, Wallace and Darwin became good friends and Wallace collaborated with Darwin in his research and helped in the revised editions of *Origin of Species*.

Origin of Species went through six editions during Darwin's lifetime and he made many corrections and alterations. In the fifth edition (1869), at Wallace's suggestion, Darwin first introduced the notorious phrase "survival of the fittest." Wallace had taken this phrase from the writings of Herbert Spencer, a well known atheist and supporter of capitalism in late nineteenth century Britain. Spencer's ideas would become known as "Social Darwinism" and he maintained that society was an organism exactly the same as a biological organism. From his perspective he argued against the building of lighthouses around the British coastline because, so he claimed,

shipwrecks were "nature's" (i.e. capitalism's) way of sorting out the fit from the unfit. Darwin had never taken any of Spencer's ideas on social evolution seriously and the phrase "survival of the fittest" is at odds with Darwin's own ideas about natural selection by adaptation.

Browne ends her account of Wallace by saying that he went on to become a "utopian socialist." In fact he became a supporter of utopian capitalism. He advocated land nationalisation and was an enthusiast for Edward Bellamy's state capitalist vision of the future in his novel *Looking Backward* (1888). When Darwin died in April 1882 aged seventy-three, *Origin of Species* had truly become one of the "Books That Shook The World," the publisher's title for this series of biographies which includes Marx's *Das Kapital* (see the review in the October *Socialist Standard*). There is a slight link between the two books. Marx thought very highly of *Origin of Species* and sent Darwin a presentation copy of *Das Kapital*. But he did not, as sometimes claimed, offer to dedicate *Das Kapital* to Darwin. Rather it was Marx's son-in-law, Edward Aveling, who offered to dedicate one of his books to Darwin. Darwin never read *Das Kapital* and he rejected Aveling's offer. **LEW**

***Fidel Castro, A biography*. By Volker Skierka. Polity. ISBN 0-7456-4081-8**



This is the second English edition brought out on the occasion of Castro's 80th birthday in August. Written in German, it originally appeared in 2000 and contains some fascinating material from the East German archives as to what its

diplomats in Havana thought of Castro and his policies (not always favourable).

Castro was the leader of a guerrilla war and popular uprising that led to the overthrow, on 1 January 1959, of the corrupt Batista dictatorship. The revolution was originally carried out under the banner of Cuban nationalism, but within a few years proclaimed itself to have been a "socialist" revolution, with Castro famously declaring in December 1961: "I am a Marxist-Leninist and will remain so until the end of my days".

By which he meant that he was committed to the idea of arriving at a society in which there would be no classes, no state, no money and no wages (which he called "communism" and which we more usually call "socialism") via a period of national state capitalism (which he, but not us, called "socialism").

The theory (which is still held by Castro) is that a revolutionary vanguard committed ultimately to socialism/communism can seize power without a conscious majority desire for socialism and then, afterwards, create such a socialist desire through education.

The argument against this is that it doesn't and can't work. The revolutionary minority can seize power but, without a socialist majority, can't establish socialism

Manchester Branch

Monday 27 November, 8.15 pm

'CHINESE DISSIDENTS'

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill,
City centre

Central London Dayschool

Saturday 11 November 1.30 to 5 pm

HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL WRONGS

1.30 Welcome (tea, coffee, biscuits)

2.00 Do Human Rights Exist?

Speaker: Adam Buick

3.15 Tea break

3.30 Recent Repressive Legislation.

Speaker: to be announced.

Room 7, Friends House, 173 Euston
Rd, NW1 (opposite Euston mainline
and underground stations).

East Anglia

Saturday 25 November, 12 noon to
4pm

12 noon: Informal chat

1pm: Meal

2pm to 4pm: Discussion

The Conservatory, back room of
Rosary Tavern, Rosary Rd, Norwich



and so has no alternative but to oversee the operation and development of capitalism, even if in a stified form. Although they can take some measures to protect workers (and Cuba has by all accounts done this in the fields of education and health care) economically they are forced to pump surplus value out of them so as to accumulate capital and develop industry. Cuba, as a small island with limited resources, can only survive in the surrounding capitalist world through importing a whole range of essential supplies but these have to be paid for by income from exports, an income which must exceed the cost of producing them. Cuba's main export has been sugar but, to compete with other sugar-producing countries, it has to keep its production costs, including labour costs, down.

On top of that, there has been the vicious and relentless US blockade. When the Russian state-capitalist bloc and then the USSR collapsed at the beginning of the nineties, Cuba suffered dire economic consequences. The revolutionary vanguard under Castro has seen its role as to protect the

letters continued

Prince of Darkness himself. Exploring the site that you recommend (www.whatreallyhappened.com), we learn that figures ranging from Bush and Kissinger to the Pope as well as the CIA, Mossad, and MI-6 are all in the service of "Illuminati bankers" (Jews, of course), working to undermine society by means that include homosexuality and feminism. (The Illuminati were an 18th century revolutionary secret society and are long defunct.).

The question of conspiracy theories, and their current popularity, was dealt with in an article in the July 2002 *Socialist Standard* to which we would refer you (see <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/jul02/conspiracy.html>). It pointed out that "the conspiratorial worldview is certainly not helpful in promoting an understanding of modern society and is itself, in large part, a product of the times we live in. The organisation of society as it currently exists - capitalism - is certainly not a conspiracy, even if its structure means that conspiracies exist from time to time within it. And for those interested in overthrowing the system which now seemingly leads to secrecy and paranoia almost like night leads to day, a more fundamental approach is needed than that exhibited by the conspiracy theorists" - *Editors*.

Zionism

Dear Editors,

Haven't we got enough of a problem with capitalism, without adding Zionism to the list of "things sent to try us"? Surely you know that Israel is a much more complex problem than is shown by your simplistic and extremely misleading article (October *Socialist Standard*). Stick to the class war!
H. G. A. HUGHES, Corwen, Wales

Dear Editors,

I read Pat Deutz's article, 'Zionism: myth and reality' in the October 2006 *Socialist Standard* and wondered what was the point of it. The article tells of the reactions of a British Jew, Susan Nathan, who emigrated to Israel only to be repelled at the treatment of the Arabs living within its boundaries. This

she recounted in a book, *The Other Side of Israel*.

My problem is not the veracity of what Nathan writes (though the emotive use of the term 'apartheid' as in 'apartheid state' is obviously misleading) but your failure to cast a socialist perspective on the whole situation. While it's true that 'the price of creating a homeland was to inflict the Jewish story of disposessions and wandering on another people - the Palestinians', this kind of event was not unique in the Middle East in the 20th century. Indeed during that century the whole map of that region was redrawn, the whole geopolitics transformed, causing dispossession, population shifts and suffering on a massive scale.

The nearest you come to mentioning this is to say that 'Socialists never supported Zionism but opposed it as yet another nationalist delusion', but you never actually refer to the other nationalisms in the region, many of which, as you must know, are just as virulent and often far more savage and racist than what is practised in Israel. Finally you fail even to draw from your analysis the point fundamental to the socialist view of capitalism that the 'democracy' the system has to offer is inevitably superficial and that, when put under pressure, even the most apparently 'democratic' of states will, if it knows it can rely on widespread support, resort to repression of minorities and opponents.

HOWARD MOSS, Swansea

Reply:

We certainly don't single out Zionism for special criticism (and our first correspondent does not say in what way the article was supposed to be "misleading"). We are opposed to all nationalism and just happened to use the example of Israel, and the treatment meted out to its "non-national" minority, to show just what a danger it is to working class unity.

We accept that other capitalist states and factions in the Middle East have pursued policies that are nationalist and anti-socialist and the article should not be construed otherwise. It was basically a review of a book about Zionism and could not reasonably be expected to comment more widely on the intricate policies of the Middle East in any developed way. - *Editors*

people of Cuba from the worst effects of the operation of world capitalism. But it has not been easy, with the vanguard finding itself at times forced to impose drastic cuts in living standards. The most it can claim is to have done this in a more equal way than in other "Third World" countries, though at the same time it has sought to protect the people not just from capitalist propaganda but also from any criticism of its own regime.

Will the state capitalist regime in Cuba survive the death of Castro? Skierka thinks that the regime is more solid than the Cuban exiles in Miami (and the CIA) imagine. But already the vanguard has been forced to develop tourism - which has taken over from sugar as the main generator of foreign currencies - but, with this, have come some of the very things that the revolution wanted to remove such as servility and money-seeking.

Unfortunately, there literally is no hope for the people of the "Third World" within the world market system that is capitalism. It must go before anything constructive can be achieved.

ALB



SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX

An index to articles in 2005 can be obtained by sending two first-class stamps to Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
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- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

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www.worldsocialism.org

describes a dinner at which "everything was simple, though so excellent of its kind; and it was made clear to us that this was no feast, only an ordinary meal." Nineteenth-century capitalism had yet to invent processed and convenience food on any large scale, so we can only guess what Morris and others would have thought about seeing a future for them in socialism.

Later socialists explore what will happen to food. *Our pamphlet Socialism as a Practical Alternative* suggests that "socialism would be unlikely to want to saturate the land with harmful chemicals. The confinement of animals in the dark and in cramped spaces may be part of the most 'labour efficient' method of converting cereal inputs into meat products, but socialism would surely not carry this on." The question of meat products is controversial and will probably remain so. There are vegetarians and carnivores in the Socialist Party; their respective proportions may change, but there is no reason to suppose that either group will be eliminated.

Also controversial is the transport of food over long distances. The pamphlet

quoted above suggests that "Inter-supply of some foods would take place between the tropical and temperate regions." We can't foresee the extent to which global warming and other environmental problems may force a reduction within capitalism of long-distance food transport. Controlled climatic zones (Eden projects on a larger scale) may enable foods now grown only in some climates to be grown locally.

Spending time and effort on cooking is now a leisure activity for some and a chore to be avoided for others. In socialism, with the cessation of activities necessary only to capitalism, more people will be able to enjoy the preparation of food if they wish. Of course, some may not wish - they may prefer doing other things. There will be people with large appetites and people with small appetites. Left-overs from capitalism may persist for a while but surely not for long, as people get used to production solely for need and free access in the context of social responsibility. ■

STAN PARKER

exploitable.

Outsourcing of jobs continues to drive down wages and living standards for the majority. The crisis in the high price of oil raises the level of discontent. It may be nearly the cheapest petrol in the world at the pumps but if you can't afford to fill your tank you can't get to work. Control of the oil can be seen as a prime motivation of the White House and the Pentagon, high prices being good for them and their cronies personally. However the US public want to see their soldiers "home" and the price of gas down.

All of the above, the Axis of Evil, the terrorism, the dissenters, the thousand-and-one movements across the world seeking to "make a difference", the discontent at home, are threats of differing degrees to the current position of the US. While they are not socialist, more and more people are rejecting the idea of a world ruled by US capitalism. And that makes them more open to listening with an open mind to the case for socialism. ■

Janet Surman

Education and the Southern Negro



Some parts of the Southern States of America have recently been the scenes of intense anti-negro mob violence. This violence was part of resistance to the attempts by the American Government to integrate negro and white school children within the American system of education. One of the reasons given why the negro should be rejected is that he is "biologically inferior" to the white, and that integration of negro and white will ultimately create a general lowering of human standards, both biologically and socially. We of the Socialist Party do not accept these vicious assumptions. The question important to us is this: What is it about the biological make-up of the various branches of the human family that prevent it from living together in a universal harmony of mutual co-operation? The answer is nothing, and this is the principle that is a guide to Socialists on this issue (...)

One thing surely will frustrate the southern integrationist's hopes, and that is a slump or a margin

of unemployed. With little point in taking up the negro labour slack, surely the fervour of the Government's bent on educational integration will be cooled, and events have taught us that in such a case we should



expect an intensification of race hatred. Such events should teach the white worker that he is a victim not of any "black menace," but a victim of the indiscriminate vicissitudes of a system which is not concerned with his true human needs. The "black menace" problem for the white worker is a myth, just as the hope that educational

integration under capitalism will bring the negro worker happiness is also a myth. In fact, with each other's help, they have a new world to win - Socialism.

(From an article by P. K. L., *Socialist Standard*, November 1956)

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Postman's knock?

"Devotees of conspiracy theories could be excused for desecrating some determined backroom manoeuvring to ensure so swift a climb up the Greasy Pole"

The next time a flood of junk mail and red-printed bills comes through the front door do not, as it were, wish you could kill the messenger. Be aware that the friendly local postie may one day be Prime Minister of Great Britain or, even more distressingly, Leader of the Labour Party. Such an event may be heartening to anyone who is sustained by a conviction that this is a great land of opportunity and that capitalism is the finest arrangement of affairs as it allows anyone, no matter how humble their origins, to rise by their own abilities up to the highest points in society where they can look down on those whose mail they once delivered.

For example there is Alan Johnson, whose mother died when he was 12, four years after his father had abandoned the family. It looked as if he would be placed in a children's home but his sister, although only 15, persuaded their social worker that she could care for both of them. Living where the Westway flyover now belches noise and fumes, Johnson went to a local grammar school where he did not get his name onto the varnished honours board; in fact he says the school were "glad to see the back" of him. He took a job as a shelf-filler at Tesco's but a problem about his lunch break put an end to that; he already had a child so he moved to Slough, to work as a postman. That led to him being elected as a local trade union official. A long time after life in a council house under the Westway and then in John Betjeman's favourite Buckinghamshire town he won a seat in the House of Commons. A few minor ministerial jobs developed into a place in the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Education. At this year's Labour Party conference, among the pushing and shoving, the arm twisting and back stabbing, Johnson was spoken of as a challenger for the Leadership but he seemed to lose his appetite for the job - in spite of setting up websites with names like Johnson4leader.com.



Johnson: "never a Trot, or a semi-Trot. I was never, ever a Trot."

Conspiracy?

Devotees of conspiracy theories could be excused for desecrating some determined backroom manoeuvring to ensure so swift a climb up the Greasy Pole. Johnson's constituency - Hull East and Hessle - was previously held by Stuart Randall, who had started out as an apprentice electrician before blossoming into a computer expert - which did not prevent a parliamentary journalist describing him as "nondescript". Randall resigned from the Commons in 1997, allowing Johnson to take over a rock solid Labour majority and Randall to be shuffled off to the House of Lords. Then there was the matter of Johnson's promotion in September 2004 to his first Cabinet job, as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (where he could start work on harassing Incapacity Benefit claimants back to work). The previous occupant of this job was Andrew Smith, who obligingly decided that he needed to spend more time with his family and with his constituency of Oxford East. Perhaps he was alarmed by the slashing of his 2001 majority of over 10,000 votes down to 963 in 2005. And perhaps Johnson's promotion in Smith's place was not unconnected with the fact that, before he got into Parliament, he had been the only member of Labour's NEC to support the new Leader Blair in his determination to get rid of Clause Four.

Tuition Fees

Like many New Labour leaders, Johnson shows some embarrassment about his past, about those carefree days in opposition when a budding politician could say almost anything, join almost any organisation, provided it seemed radical and

exciting. Interviewed in the *Observer Magazine* (17 September), he insisted that "the first thing about me is I was never a Trot, or a semi-Trot. I was never, ever a Trot." But he did not then go on to admit that he was once a branch official in the Communist Party. Of course he has put all that nonsense behind him now that he is in the serious business of government. His record of support for Blair is unblemished - so pure that when he was the Minister of State for

Further and Higher Education under Charles Clarke he played what Tony Blair later described as "a vital role in the successful introduction of variable tuition fees during the last parliament". This mannered praise refers to the fierce battle the government had to endure before they were able to bludgeon the measure through Parliament. In that conflict Johnson's smooth negotiating talents were crucial alongside Clarke's belligerence. It was, Johnson said, "...a charm offensive. I was the charm and Clarke was offensive".

This joke may not have gone down well with students and their families who struggle through the time at university and then emerge with the right to wear an academic gown and to pay off a substantial debt. Johnson offers this as justification for his attitude: "If I thought it was going to damage working-class kids, I wouldn't have backed it". Another way of putting this feebly circular case would be to argue that the very fact he had backed the tuition fees must mean that they did not damage anyone; it is a style often used by Tony Blair to justify indefensible actions such as the war in Iraq. In any case Johnson's attitude is rather at variance with his account of how his daughter was treated by the education system. In an area which still had grammar schools she failed her 11 Plus and was placed in a comprehensive school: "She was very bright but, well, probably life chances were lost then... So am I bitter about selection? Yes. I've seen what it does to kids". But he does not seem to be "bitter" about his support for the proposals to set up "trust" schools which, however words are twisted and whatever promises are made, are intended to operate selection policies which can cost the pupils "life chances".

Claptrap

On other issues Johnson has solidly supported the government - on ID cards, the war in Iraq, foundation hospitals, the "anti-terrorism" laws. And there will be many more examples, as he strives to promote his career through expressed loyalty to the government. When he was appointed Secretary of State for Education, the postie who delivers the mail to his office brought a long letter from Blair which set out the tasks ahead of him: "...build on our unprecedented record of economic achievement...ensure the long term security and prosperity of our country and its people...deliver real improvements for ordinary hard working families and to underline our Government's commitment to social justice through policies to expand opportunity and tackle the most deep seated causes of social exclusion". At the very end of the letter Blair slips a bit of reality into the clap trap: "Your plans will, of course, need to be set against the background of lower growth in funding than in recent years". One symptom of that reality is that there are 60,000 children in care in this country who are, according to Johnson, treated "appallingly". This is after nine years of a Labour government presiding over the crises and failures of capitalism. How does the ex-postie, with all his talents for smoothing over uncomfortable facts, explain that away? ■

IVAN



Voice from the Back



Land of the Free?

The following report from Washington paints a dreadful picture of modern capitalism. "In

the world's biggest economy, one in eight Americans and almost one in four blacks lived in poverty last year, the US Census Bureau said on Tuesday, releasing a figure almost unchanged from 2004" (*Reuter*, 29 August). The report went on to say: "In all, some 37 million Americans lived below the poverty line, defined as having an annual income around \$10,000 (£5,300) for an individual or \$20,000 (£10,600) for a family of four." 200 quid a week for a family of four, and they wonder why they have a crime problem?

Homeless in Britain?

The Department for Communities and Local Government announced that the number of homeless families in England had dropped to 19,430 between June and April this year, down 29 percent on the same period in 2005, but charities have queried these figures. "There are as many as 380,000 hidden homeless people, predominately single, in Britain living out of sight," says Duncan Scrubsole, head of policy and strategy at Crisis" (*Inside Housing*, 15 September). Adam Sampson, the chief executive of Shelter, also queries the government's figures.



"Any drop in new cases is to be welcomed, provided this is brought about by genuine work to prevent people from losing their homes in

the first place, rather than preventing them from registering to get the help they need" (*Times*, 19 September). Anyone taking the government figures at face

value, should remember the old saying "figures don't lie, but liars can figure."

Fat Cat Britain

When the Labour Party came to power we were told "things can only get better" and so they have - for the super rich. "A global survey of the lists of the wealthiest people in 27 leading countries shows that Britain and Switzerland have by far the biggest communities of foreign-born super-rich in the world. Switzerland, with its reputation for banking secrecy and strict regulations, has long been regarded as a magnet for multi-millionaires. But Britain, with the special attraction of tax incentives for billionaires from overseas, is fast catching up as a new refuge for the rich" (*Sunday Times*, 24 September). Britain now has more billionaires per head of its population than America. Was this what members of the working class envisaged on election day when they sang "things can only get better"?

Interested in Interest?

The Koran prohibits something called *riba*, loosely translated as interest and this has hindered the development of capitalism. Something similar happened in medieval times when the Christians banned usury, but the theologist soon found a way around that and now we have thriving banks in the Vatican. Islam theology may have taken a little longer but now they have joined the capitalist bandwagon. "Islamic banking scholars have found ways of accommodating their philosophical abhorrence of money as a commodity with the need to create financing tools. Typically, this involves converting interest into a rent or a profit share" (*Times*, 30 September). The Koran may hold sway in the mosque, but outside in the real world capitalism dictates.



A Fistful Of Dollars

Being homeless in Britain may be awful, but think how much worse to be sleeping rough in a Russian winter. That is a problem that does not confront the Russian

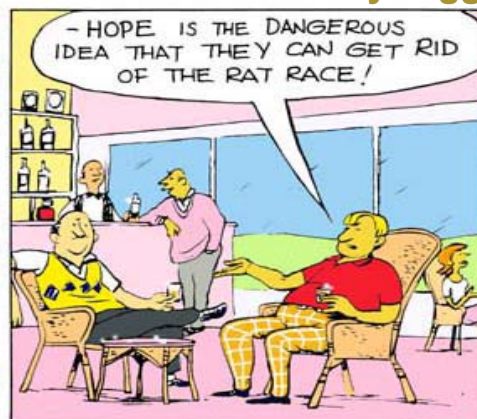


billionaire Roustam Tariko to judge by this item. "At a palace in St Petersburg, which has been converted into a disco for the night by Moscow's most fashionable party organisers, the vodka flows and a New York disco diva sings Thank You for the Music, while ballet dancers pirouette around her. ... Roustam Tariko, the man picking up the \$3 million (£1.6 million) tab for the party, turns to me: 'People like you are already tired of \$100,000 parties. They are nothing special for you'" (*Times*, 7 October). If a Moscow winter proves too severe he can always flee to his house in New York or Sardina, an escape that is impossible for the Russian homeless.

A Handful Of Pennies

It is reckoned that 1.9 million children under the age of five die every year from diarrhoeal diseases and that the means of saving their lives only cost a couple of pence. "The result, according to the World Health Organization (WHO): 3 million people a year still die from diarrhoeal complications, including 1.9 million children under the age of five, or 17% of the estimated deaths in that age group" (*Time*, 16 October). All that is required is a large pinch of salt and a fistful of sugar dissolved in a jug of clean water, but in the crowded cities and remote areas of the world's poorest this has proved impossible. Capitalism breeds poverty and ignorance and makes this madness possible. The establishment of world socialism will almost immediately save these 3 million people from premature death.

Free Lunch



by Rigg

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standard

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Will the waves rule Britannia?



Capitalism throws us in at the deep end



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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial

Saddam's death penalty

It was nauseating to hear President Bush pontificate about the decision to execute Saddam and using words such as "victory" and "justice". If Bush could have cited any moral superiority he has over Saddam then his words might have carried weight, but the simple truth is that this was one opportunistic and blood-drenched killer revelling in the misfortune of another and, far worse, for political expediency.

The very fact that the death penalty was passed on Saddam two days before the US mid-term elections, at a time when Bush's popularity in opinion polls was receding a serious fall, can hardly be ignored. Saddam had been in custody for two-and-a-half years before any charge was levelled against him and the Iraqi Higher Criminal Court miraculously came into existence the same week he was captured. When the time came Saddam was no longer a tool of US foreign policy but an instrument of Republican Party domestic policy.

The first thing to observe is that Saddam's trial was not an Iraqi legal procedure; it was a White House coordinated process from start to finish. It was funded by a \$138 million grant from Congress and orchestrated by a large team of staff know as the Regime Crimes Unit and operating from the US Embassy in Baghdad.

It was Washington and London who selected the trial judges, who were then sent to London to be trained on how to handle the case and who were then taken to Italy to rehearse the trial.

Several judges stepped down, one having been rounded on by the Iraqi government because he was considered to lenient. Three defence lawyers were kidnapped and murdered and a similar fate befell one witness for Saddam.

Many have asked why Saddam could not have been tried in a similar manner to Slobodan Milosevic whose case was heard at The Hague. Quite simply Washington would

have pooh-poohed such a suggestion, just as it has refused to recognise the International Criminal Court or judgements laid down by the International Court of Justice. Indeed the US has little regard for any international legislation or treaty, including the Geneva Convention. All are seen as meddling in the pursuit of its global corporate interests.

Historical amnesiacs would do well to remember that Saddam came to power via CIA assistance and was financed and chemically-armed by the West for many years in his war against Iran. Successive American and British governments turned a blind eye to his atrocities, including his mustard gassing of Iranians and the poison gas massacre of 5,000 Kurds at Halabja in 1988, only showing concern when he invaded Kuwait without the nod from Washington and worried the pro-American oil sheiks of Saudi Arabia in the process.

From 1991 up until the US-led invasion of 2003, an estimated 1 million Iraqis died as a result of UN Sanctions. When, Madeleine Albright, the US secretary of State to Iraq, was questioned on American TV about the deaths of 500,000 Iraqi children as a result of economic sanctions, she commented that it was "a price worth paying." Since the 2003 invasion some 655,000 Iraqis have been killed. Throughout Saddam's 24-year reign he never killed this many humans. Meanwhile, US-led intervention in Iraq in 15 years has resulted in the deaths of almost 1.75 million. And this is in the name of justice!

There is of course nothing the warring factions in Iraq have to celebrate about the death penalty. Their lot has not been improved one iota since the US-led invasion and even if they live in a relatively stable Iraq they will exist as wage slaves, their lives subordinated to dictates of profit-merchants and the whims of religiously-aligned warlords, their future always over-shadowed by the dangerous game of geo-politics, their blood worth far less to the powerful than the country's oil.

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Hot Air Emissions



change could be irreversible."

This is not the much-publicised *Stern Report* of October, but an earlier report, *Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change*, published by the UK government in January of this year, based on research presented by speakers at a conference held by the UK Meteorological Office in February 2005. (*BBC Online*, 30 January).

Since then the heat and emissions released by politicians of all persuasions has increased to dangerous and unsustainable proportions. A summit in Monterrey in Mexico in October was hailed by the 20 biggest global polluters as 'very positive', then more noise over the *Stern* report later that month, which tended to be taken more seriously by politicians since they listen to economists with infinitely greater attention than they ever listen to scientists. But then in November the politicians were complaining that the politicians weren't doing anything, as Kofi Annan despaired at the UN climate summit in Nairobi that global warming was as "grave a threat as conflict, poverty and the spread of weapons." Sceptics, he added, with a politician's ear for the ringing soundbite, were "out of step, out of arguments and out of time".

The only politician in Britain in recent weeks to actually do anything, as opposed to making speeches and going to junkets in Mexico for Important High-Level Talks, has been dear old Red Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London, who has infuriated the Kensington and Mayfair set by announcing a punishing £25 per day congestion charge for Band G motor vehicles, which is effectively the SUV-class 4x4 'Chelsea tractor', emitters of carbon roughly double that of any other car. Many of these can be seen outside school gates during the school run, and are apparently second family cars used for kids, shopping and round-town errands, themselves the most carbon-inefficient types of journey. Ken observes correctly that people who can afford these monsters can afford any mainstream car so their decision to buy these heavy polluters and stick two fingers up at the world is clearly deliberate.

Most people who have even the mildest concern over capitalism's damage to the planet must surely have the most searing contempt for anti-social yahoos in bull-bar Mitsubishi tankettes, so it was not surprising that this measure was greeted with ecstatic cheers, even though it won't come in until 2009. What a pity Ken went and spoiled it all immediately by getting himself into trouble over a freebie junket (by carbon-reckless air travel, of course) to Venezuela to visit his soul-mate Chavez, at the council taxpayer's expense. Never mind, the thought is what counts.

And the thought, in government circles, is all about counting at the moment, carbon counting. The UK government has announced, through the annual speech made by its velvet glove puppet the Queen, that its target of reducing carbon emissions by 60 percent by 2050 will now be enshrined in law, with a Carbon Committee set up to make sure it happens (*BBC*

"It is now plain that the emission of greenhouse gases... is causing global warming at a rate that is unsustainable", writes Tony Blair in the preface to the UK government report which concludes that "there is only a small chance of greenhouse gas emissions being kept below dangerous levels." When questioned about this report Radio 4 Margaret Beckett, environment minister, states "we could come to a tipping point where

Online, 15 November). They'll check every five years or so and make a speech, or an excuse, depending on where they're up to. So, lots of noise again for now, and leisure enough not to worry for the next five years, until everybody's forgotten about the targets. And what if the targets haven't been met then? Well, they can just hold over publishing the report until a useful 'bad news day' comes along.

Everyone's showing willing, and that's nice. The Nairobi conference was held, not to do anything, but to agree a timetable to discuss globally binding emissions targets in time for the expiry of the Kyoto Protocol in 2012. Nobody stuck to the Kyoto Protocol in the first place, but nevertheless it is very important to hold talks to establish agreement over the next generation of agreements that nobody will stick to either.

The European Union has set itself the pious goal, not of reducing total carbon emissions, but of containing the increase to levels which will push the average temperature up by 'only' 2 degrees. An increase of 2 degrees centigrade is enough to melt all the ice in Greenland, but this is considered acceptable considering the dire consequences if they go even higher than that. To keep to this target, atmospheric carbon - originally 227 parts per million (ppm) at pre-industrial levels and now at 380 ppm - needs to be stabilised at around 450 ppm. Speaking on the same programme as Margaret Beckett in January, the UK government's chief scientific adviser, Sir David King, called this 'unlikely'. "We're going to be at 400 ppm in 10 years' time", he said. "To aim for 450 would, I am afraid, seem unfeasible." So why set such a target then? Well, they've got to say something, haven't they?

It's all a question of motivation.

The ugly truth is probably that Europe is hoping to trade its problem away with the new carbon emissions trading system, whereby they get to smoke and Africa gets the cancer. Russia didn't even turn up to Monterrey, presumably because global warming doesn't seem so bad when you've got frostbite in Irkutsk, and it's a very chill wind that blows nobody any good. The Chinese, meanwhile, on being invited to join in huge emissions reductions at a time when they are the fastest industrialising nation on Earth, smile politely at this blatant imperialist attempt to clip their dragon's wings, and carry on about their filthy business, supremely confident that the greedy foreign investment will continue unabated in the free-for-all of their boomtown economy.

The people who are most worried are not the Europeans or the Americans or the Russians or the Chinese, it is the so-called developing countries who in fact are never allowed to develop and who occupy the equatorial belt which is soon likely to become an incineration zone. That they are less guilty of pollution than anyone, but are going to more punished than everyone, is yet another example of the sort of 'justice' meted out by an economic system in which nice guys finish last and rich guys fix all the races. Their coastal infrastructures are going to be flooded out, their wetlands will dry out, their crops will die, and wars and migrations will escalate. The Nairobi conference, the first climate change conference to be held in that continent, aimed to bring another dimension to the debate, that of human rights. It was, said Kofi Annan and other delegates, a human right not to be killed by the callous self-serving vandalism of other people's behaviour. Perhaps this is true in some moral sense. But capitalism is a blind process

of profit accumulation. It doesn't understand morals. The administrators of capitalism serve a supremely ignorant master. For all their hot air, they are never going to challenge the thing they most believe in. They will still be making speeches while the world burns.



Zionism

Dear Editors,
I agree with Howard Moss that the aim should be for articles to give the socialist perspective (Letters, November *Socialist Standard*). However it is not so unusual for articles to outline some aspect of history or current events and only give reference to the socialist aim in the concluding comments. As socialists we wish to be as well informed as possible. I found Susan Nathan's book *The Other Side of Israel* (now available in paperback) both moving and informative. My concern is that the article (intended as a review) may not fairly represent the book as it only refers to some aspects of its content. For example it does not mention the author's background. Her father was born in South Africa, the son of Jewish refugees from Lithuania. She is thoroughly aware of Jewish history, including the discrimination suffered by her great-grandfather in Lithuania, and had first hand experience of apartheid in South Africa. The book does not claim that conditions in Israel are identical to those that formerly existed in South Africa - the "petty elements" are absent. As stated in the article the term 'apartheid' is applied in a specific sense and its use is only emotive if you do not agree that Israeli Arabs are treated as second class citizens.
PAT DEUTZ

Structured party

Dear Editors,
I am a bona fide socialist and I will never be anything else. I am totally opposed to

inequality, exploitation, oppression, poverty, hunger, war and everything associated with capitalism. However I do find fault with your outlook. I can't see how we can challenge capitalism without being organised in a structured socialist party with an elected leadership. I believe that the leadership should have no special privileges, but to vigorously pursue party policy which would be decided at conference.

You criticise Lenin and Trotsky in your ideas, but I think the Bolsheviks', with Lenin and Trotsky, was the most correct that the Russian revolution could have been in organising socialism in that era. So I would like you to educate me by explaining a better way of achieving socialism.
C. DOBSON, Wigan

Reply:

We do stand for a "structured socialist party" but on quite different lines from Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Starting from the view that, left to themselves, the working class can only develop a trade union consciousness, they stood for organising as a vanguard party to lead the workers. They also said that this party should be organised on a top-down basis with a "leadership" which, while perhaps formally elected, had the power to make policy and order other members what to do. Such a structure may have been necessary to overthrow Tsarism but not to establish socialism - which they didn't anyway, only a form of state capitalism.

We say that the socialist political party should be organised on a quite different basis: the power to make policy should lie with the membership through delegate

conferences and referendums; there should be no party leadership, only an executive or administrative committee charged with arranging for the policies decided by the membership to be implemented. We also say, contrary to Lenin, that workers can advance beyond trade unionism and can understand socialism. When a sufficient majority of them have, and have organised themselves democratically, ready to take over and run society, they can send mandated delegates to parliament to take control of political power and use it to end capitalism and coordinate the change-over to socialism - *Editors*.

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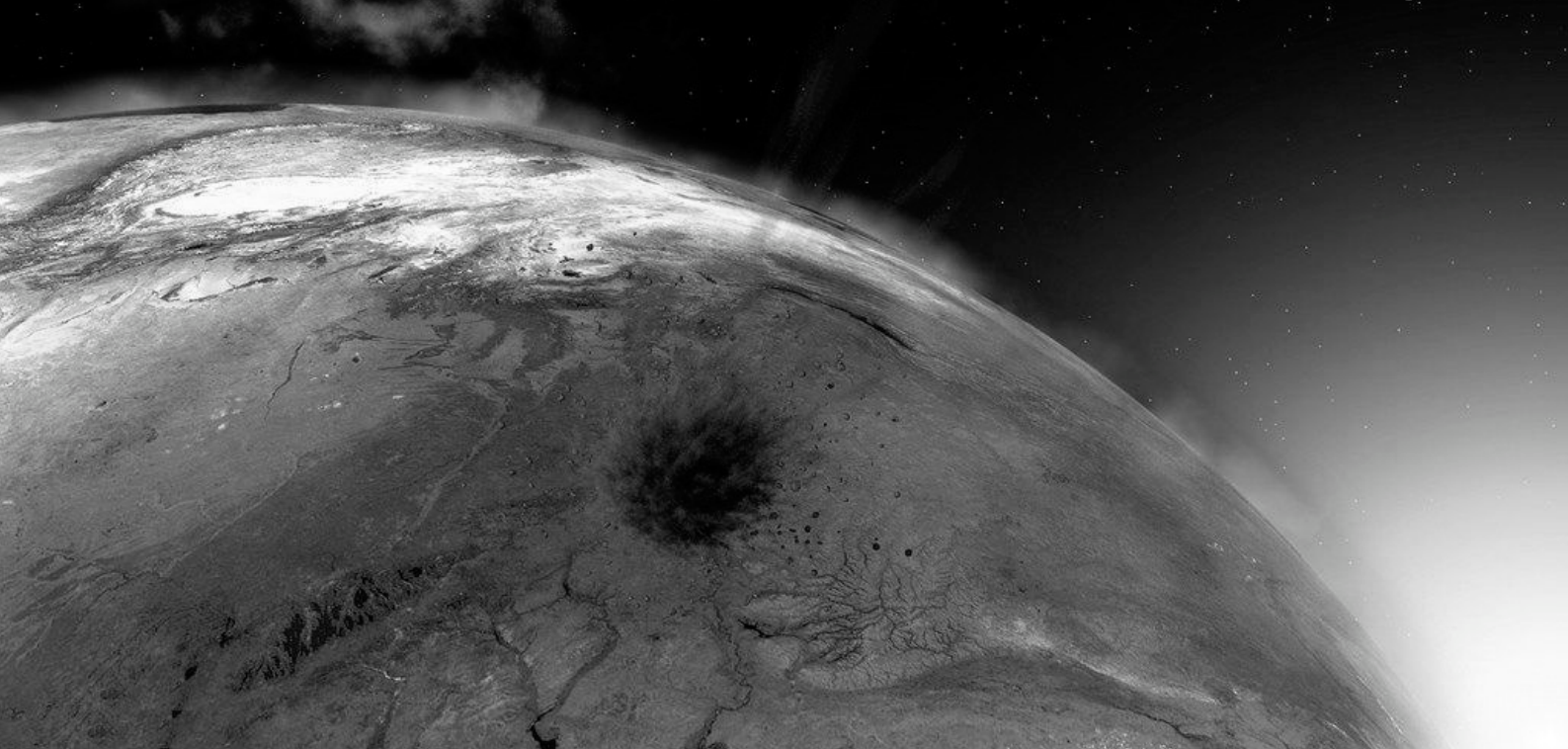
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Capitalism and climate change



"The Market has failed. Long Live the Market!" is the illogical conclusion of the Stern Report on the Economics of Climate Change published at the end of October.

Climate change", the report says, "presents a unique challenge to economics: it is the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen". Further, if nothing is done - if "business-as-usual", or BAU as the report calls it, continues - things will get worse: "Our actions over the coming decades could create risks of major disruption to economic and social activity, later in this century and in the next, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century".

This devastating description of one of the consequences of capitalism doesn't come from some socialist critic of the profit system, but from a pillar of the Establishment, Sir Nicholas Stern, a former chief economist at the World Bank and now an adviser to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The failure in question is that the spontaneous operation of the market has resulted in the release of so much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere that it has caused the average world temperature to rise and to go on rising (because of the time lag between cause and effect) for the next forty or fifty years. The market-oriented enterprises responsible - coal, oil and gas burning power stations, heavy industry, airlines, rail and other transport firms, car

producers - have only had to pay for those costs that they have had to buy on the market; as releasing carbon dioxide costs them nothing it is not something they have had to take into account. So they haven't, with the results described by Sir Nicholas Stern in the first part of his report.

As a conventional economist, he sees the solution as making the polluters from now on pay in one form or another. Traditionally this would have been through taxation and regulations. Stern still sees a role for these, but proposes to give spontaneous market forces a second chance via so-called "carbon trading".

Carbon trading

Under this scheme there would be an international agreement fixing an overall level of carbon emissions for each country which would be less than what it currently emits; that country would then set enterprises within it an allowed level of emissions. If they exceed this level they would be fined. On the other hand, if they emit less carbon than allowed they can sell the unused part of their quota to some other enterprise even in another country. This other enterprise can then emit more carbon than allowed to it, without having to pay the fine.

Carbon trading is the buying and selling of such "permits to pollute". It is

supposed to help the environment by giving polluting firms a monetary incentive to reduce their emission even lower than the allowed level; the more they reduce their emissions below this level the more money they can make from selling their surplus permits. The buyers of these permits would be firms having difficulty reducing their emissions below the level allowed them; if they failed to reduce to this level they would still have to pay something, but the idea is that buying a permit would be cheaper than paying the fine.

A market for "permits to emit carbon dioxide" would thus develop. Where there's a market there will also be middlemen, who in this case will specialise in the buying and selling of these permits. There would also be the possibility of speculating on future changes in their price.

Two such schemes already exist. The Emission Trading Scheme, run by the European Union, and the Clean Development Mechanism provided for under the Kyoto Treaty. One carbon trader, James Cameron (who had helped negotiate the Kyoto Treaty), has said of such schemes:

"What is happening in these markets is the creation of environmental value. The deals being done will mean large volumes of greenhouse gases are being taken out using the capitalist system" (Times, 12

Will it work?

That's the theory and it is true that, to work, such schemes depend on the emergence of profit-seeking carbon traders like Cameron. Actually, however, these schemes are still bureaucratic attempts to manipulate the market and so are open to political interference, mismanagement and corruption, as the experience of the EU's scheme shows. Under it member-state governments and the European Commission negotiate quotas per country and then the countries allocate the quotas to individual enterprises (mainly power stations) within their borders.

But instead of governments vying with each other to reduce carbon emissions, they have sought to win advantages for their own industries by asking for, and then allocating, over-generous quotas, with a view to allowing their industries to profit by selling permits they never needed in the first place. The trouble is that, if the quotas are too generous, the supply of permits will far exceed the demand, so undermining the whole scheme. Which has threatened to happen, as the *Times* (9 October) reported:

"The future of Europe's Emissions Trading System (ETS) hangs in the balance as officials in Brussels prepare to do battle this month with member states to uphold the credibility of a market in permits to pollute. The market stands accused of generating billions of euros in windfall profits for utilities at the expense of consumers.

The European Commission needs to clamp down hard on member states, market analysts say, if it is to rescue the ETS, which has fallen into disrepute over lax carbon emission targets set for the first phase of the scheme from 2005-07. The ETS was devised to create a market incentive to cut greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, but the market was undermined from the beginning by weak-willed governments. The system imposes a cap on emissions of carbon dioxide, forcing companies that exceed their allowance to buy 'permits to pollute' from companies that manage to cut emissions. European governments were too generous with the caps, causing the price of permits to collapse in May. Lack of confidence in the market encouraged power generators to switch from cleaner gas to dirty coal.

The cap in the first phase was 100 million tonnes more than actual emissions in the first year . . ."

British capitalists have been complaining that the less stringent quotas proposed by other governments would give their enterprises a competitive edge over British ones:

"Britain has submitted its carbon allocation plans to the European Union before most other countries, generating fears that ministers will damage industry's competitiveness through their eagerness to be in the vanguard of environmental improvements. (. . .)

Martin Temple, director general of the EEF, the manufacturers' organisation, said:

'Yet again, the UK is in the vanguard whilst the rest of Europe remains in the starting blocks. Not only have we published targets ahead of the majority of our major European competitors, but set limits which are likely to be far more stringent. While

much of the immediate burden will be felt by the electricity generators, these costs will be passed on to industry and other energy consumers. At a time of rapidly rising energy prices, the Government's desire to show leadership risks further eroding our competitiveness'" (*Times*, 22 August).

Some of this will be upping the ante in negotiations, and the scheme will survive, perhaps in a more rigorous form. But if such a scheme experiences difficulties like this in the EU which, with a relatively strong inter-governmental body in the Commission, reasonably reliable statistics and a relatively corruption-free civil service, is the part of the world where it stands the most chance of working, what is the likelihood of one working at world level, as Stern insists would be necessary?

Competition not cooperation

In fact, what are the chances of any world agreement to reduce carbon emissions being achieved? Clearly, climate change is a world problem and as such can only be tackled at world level. But, as the experience of the Kyoto Treaty of 1997

'President Bush stated that "I walked away from Kyoto because it would damage America's economy, you bet"'

shows, the chances of the world's major capitalist states agreeing on an adequate and effectively enforced programme are practically nil.

The reason for this is mentioned, but only in passing, in the Stern report:

"Costs of mitigation of around 1% of GDP are small relative to the costs and risks of climate change that will be avoided. However, *for some countries and some sectors the costs will be higher. There may be some impacts on the competitiveness of a small number of internationally traded products and processes*" (emphasis added).

Quite, but then Stern adds complacently, not to say idiotically, "These should not be overestimated, and can be reduced or eliminated if countries or sectors act together".

If it is going to be that easy to get international cooperation on reducing carbon emissions why has the US consistently refused to sign the Kyoto Treaty? And why have most of the wars of the last century had oil as a factor either directly or indirectly? And what about the current war in Iraq - and other conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia - , are these not evidence of the near impossibility of getting international concord and harmony about oil, the burning of which is the root of the problem of global warming?

President Bush, in a television interview with Trevor MacDonald when he was in Britain for the G8 Summit last year, bluntly stated the US government's view of Kyoto:

"There was a debate over Kyoto, and I

made the decision . . . that the Kyoto treaty didn't suit our needs. In other words, the Kyoto treaty would have wrecked our economy . . . I walked away from Kyoto because it would damage America's economy, you bet. It would have destroyed our economy. It was a lousy deal for the American economy" (ITV, 4 July).

The clue to why the Bush administration took this position can be found in the figures for carbon dioxide emissions per person by country. A map published in the *Times* (30 October) showed that only three countries exceed 15 tonnes per person - the US, Canada and Australia. EU countries all fall in the 5-10 tonnes range. In fact the US releases more than twice as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere per person than Britain: around 20 tonnes compared with 9.5. (Incidentally, such statistics are often interpreted wrongly to mean that the average individual American releases twice as much carbon as the average British individual; what in fact it means is that US industry releases twice as much carbon as European industry per head of population. If individuals in the US, or in Britain for that matter, were to reduce their personal release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, as for instance by not driving gas-guzzling cars or by turning off the lights when they leave a room, that would only marginally reduce the figures.)

Bush and his government are charged with looking after the overall, general interests of US capitalist corporations. They concluded that, because US industry depends proportionately more on energy derived from burning fossil fuels than most other countries and trading blocs, it would cost it comparatively more to reduce carbon emissions, so undermining its competitiveness vis-à-vis its main rivals on the world market, especially Europe. This is why US corporations have hired scientists to rubbish the proposition that the current global warming is mainly caused by human industrial activity (they suggest a natural cause such as a slight warming of the Sun). And is why the US government will walk away from any other scheme to reduce carbon emissions that would put its industries at a competitive disadvantage.

We are not in a position to judge who is right about what is causing global warming but it is happening and, whatever its cause, its consequences - changing agricultural productivity in different parts of the world, population migrations, a rise in sea level - can only be dealt with by planned and coordinated global action within the framework of a united world. Only in a frontierless world in which the Earth's natural and industrial resources have become the common heritage of all humanity can the necessary measures be taken to stabilise carbon emissions and to deal with the consequences of global warming.

At one time even supporters of capitalism would have proposed, if not a world capitalist government, at least some world body with real powers to coordinate a response. Now, all they can come up with - as in the Stern report - is to rely on profit-seeking "carbon traders" to solve the problem. If that's all capitalism can offer, then, in the words of Private Fraser, we are all doomed - unless, that is, we establish world socialism.■

ADAM BUICK

The Stern gag - capitalist policies for capitalism's problems



"At every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing over nature - but that we, with flesh and blood and brain, belong to nature and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly. We are gradually learning to get a clear view of the indirect, more remote social effects of our productive activity, and so are afforded the opportunity to control and regulate these effects well. This regulation, however, requires a complete revolution in our existing mode of production . . . in our whole contemporary social order"

You could be forgiven for thinking the above quotation came from a modern-day ecologist or environmentalist, commenting on impending global ecological catastrophe and drawing upon the myriad reports currently in existence, written by concerned scientists, that portend cataclysmic changes to our life-styles if we don't stop abusing our natural environment immediately. The quote is in fact 131 years old and is taken from *Dialectics of Nature*, written by Frederick

Engels (1875).

Let's get one thing straight from the outset. Socialists have been warning about the effects of capitalism's penny-pinching production methods and how they impact on the wider environment for well over a hundred years, and it is often with despair that we reiterate Engels' message from the later 19th century, more so now that state-of-the-art technology exists that provides hard evidence as to the exact effects of capitalist production.

Global disaster

It was, therefore, not with any great sigh of relief, or with shock and disbelief, that socialists received the findings of the much-trumpeted Stern report on climate change and indeed the government's reaction to it. It does make for grim reading, suggesting that time is running out to really address the environment question - previous opportunities having been pathetically squandered at the Hague and Kyoto Summits - and that the possibility of preventing a global disaster is "already almost out of reach".

The 700-page report, commissioned by the Treasury and carried out by the former World Bank chief economist, Sir Nicholas Stern, argues that environmental problems will be "difficult or impossible to reverse" unless something is done now. It paints a disturbing picture of the future of the planet if overall global temperatures rise by just two degrees Centigrade. It suggests that four billion people could face water shortages, that sixty million Africans would be exposed to malaria and that forty percent of the world's species would face extinction.

Two-hundred million more people, it

goes on, could be exposed to hunger and that figure could rise to 550 million if the temperature rose one extra degree because of a knock-on 34 percent drop in crop yields across Africa and the Middle East. Australia's arable land would become simply too hot to sustain cereal crops. Another couple of degrees rise in temperature would, according to the report, see the ice glaciers of the Himalayas melt, depriving 300 million Chinese of a water supply. Rising sea levels would inundate half the world's major cities, creating more homelessness, and increased ocean acidity would result in a serious decline in fish stocks.

The report further informs us that "changes in weather patterns could drive down the output of the world's economies by an amount equivalent to up to £6 trillion a year by 2050, almost the entire output of the EU." But all is not lost, believe Chancellor Gordon Brown and Environment Secretary David Miliband. They point to the 'positive message' arising from the report; this being that the world has the means to avoid the awaiting cataclysm. Money can be thrown at the problem - the earth-shattering sum of one per cent of Global GDP should suffice; a figure, incidentally, which is dwarfed by global military spending.

Whiff of profits

Responding to the report, Miliband sounded quite optimistic. Interviewed by the *Independent* (30 October), he said: "The second half of his message is that the technology does exist, the financing, public and private, does exist, and the international mechanisms also exist to get to grips with this problem - so I don't think

it's a catastrophe that he puts forward. It's a challenging message."

What we are offered are capitalist remedies, and to make it all the more attractive there are profits to be had - well, the master class has to have some damned incentive before they act. As the *Independent* reported: "Combating climate change could become one of the world's biggest growth industries, generating around \$250bn of business globally by 2050." Providing, that is, that we still have a planet worth saving in 50 years time.

Environmental disaster and the best capitalist politicians can think up is to tempt the master class with the whiff of profits to come if they agree to mend their ways! Indeed, the report is punctuated with terms such as "cost-effective" and "profitability". Well, Stern is after all a leading world economist so his thoughts are naturally with his associates in big business. The very people who have disregarded the effects of their production methods on the natural environment for hundreds of years are now being asked to show it some mercy! Global environmental catastrophe can be halted by throwing money at the problem!

The simple fact is that businesses will not take the risk of falling behind in the struggle for profits and nor will any government enforce policy that will result in a drop in the profits of its respective capitalist class. This is exactly what President Bush cited when he pulled the USA out of the Kyoto Agreement. He is no doubt aware that the USA consumes more than one quarter of global oil production and is accountable for one quarter of the world's carbon dioxide emissions, while being home to only 4.5 per cent of the world's population, but his remit is not to protect the environment, nor the millions who would suffer as a direct result of environmental chaos. His job is protecting US interests all over the world, interests which are inseparable from profits.

Capitalist businesses survive by forcing out their competition, by cutting costs and sidestepping policies that hinder their expansion. They seek new outlets for their wares, to sell more and more, because this is the law of capitalism, and it is a law antagonistic to ecological concerns. It is the crazed law of capitalism that compels the big oil producers to pay teams of scientists to prepare reports that refute the findings of environmentalists who forewarn of the dire effects of current production methods.

The market economy demands that businesses only take into account their own narrow financial interests. Pleasing shareholders takes far more priority than ecological considerations. The upshot is that productive processes are distorted by this drive to make and accumulate profits. The result is an economic system governed by anarchic market forces which compel decision-makers, whatever their personal views or sentiments, to plunder, pollute and waste. They may well be loath to contaminate ecosystems, but the alternative is closure should they invest in costlier eco-friendlier production methods. Little wonder then that nature's balances are upset today, and that we face problems



such as melting glaciers, rising sea levels, acidic oceans and the like.

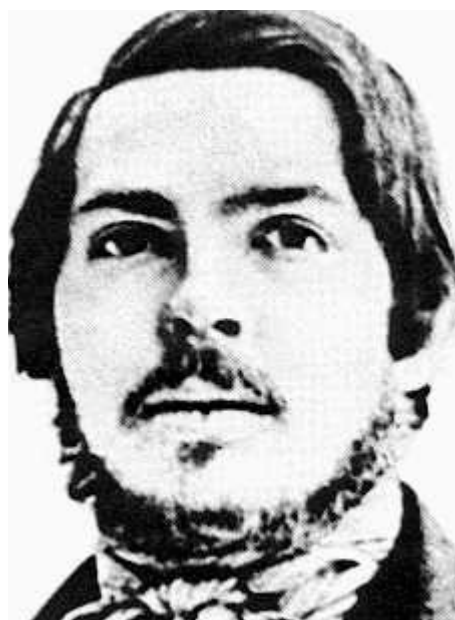
All Greens now

The Greens have long insisted that things could be put right with a change of government policy, which is exactly what Labour now proposes. The problem, they believe, can be rectified by governments forcing through laws and imposing green taxes on air travel, motoring and high emission vehicles - to protect the environment. Even the Conservatives, with their new infantile eco-logo, and the Liberals have jumped on board the green bandwagon. Shadow chancellor George Osborne promises a whole swathe of green taxes. All are seemingly convinced the problem facing the environment is an economic one insofar as the world's governments can spend their way out of environmental catastrophe.

Governments, to be sure, exist to run the political side of the profit system and, no matter how well intentioned, do not have a free hand to do what is sensible or desirable. They do not control the market-driven profit system - it controls them and shapes their policies. Which government is going to tell its oil companies to produce less oil, when these same oil producers are under constant pressure to pump more out of the ground and as cheaply as possible? Within three years annual car sales are set to hit 60 million per year, 10 million up on 2004. Which government will dare threaten these car sales with its eco-policies? At the very best their eco-policies can only slow down the speed of environmental decay, not halt it in its tracks at some future date.

Socialists are no different from others in desiring an environment in which the safety of all animal and plant species is ensured. Where we differ from our political opponents is in recognising that their demands have to be set against a well-entrenched economic and social system, based on class privilege and property and governed by the overriding law of profits first.

It has long been our case that human needs can be satisfied without recourse to production methods that adversely effect the natural environment, which is exactly



Facing page: former World Bank chief economist, Sir Nicholas Stern who, claims David Miliband (above left), put forward a 'challenging message.' Above: Frederick Engels, author of 'Dialectics of Nature'.

why we advocate the establishment of a system of society in which production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit. We are not talking about nationalisation or any other tinkering with the present system, but rather its entire abolition and replacement with a global system in which the Earth's natural and industrial resources are commonly owned and democratically controlled; a society in which each production process takes into consideration not only human need but any likely effect upon the environment.

One does not need a mastery of Earth sciences to envisage types of farming that preserve and enhance the natural fertility of the soil, the systematic recycling of materials obtained from non-renewable energy sources while developing alternative sources that continually renew themselves (i.e. solar energy and wind power); industrial processes that avoid releasing poisonous chemicals or radioactivity into the biosphere; the manufacture of solid goods made to last, not planned to break down after a period of time.

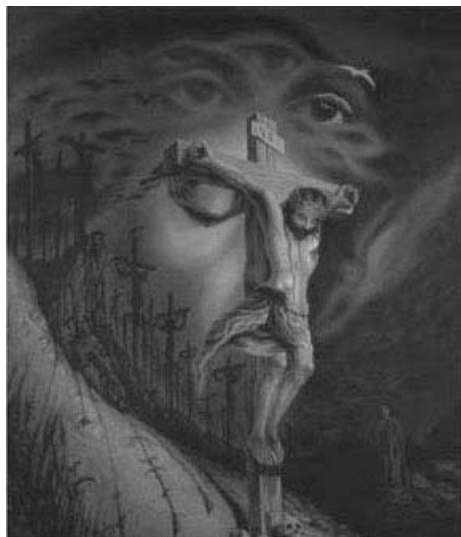
Once the Earth's natural and industrial resources have been wrested from the master class and become the common heritage of all humanity, then production can be geared to meeting needs in an ecologically acceptable way, instead of making profits without consideration for the environment. This the only basis on which we can meet our needs whilst respecting the laws of nature and to at last begin to reverse the degradation of the environment caused by the profit system. The only effective strategy for achieving a free and democratic society and, moreover, one that is in harmony with nature, is to build up a movement which has the achievement of such a society as its objective. ■

JOHN BISSETT

Whose thoughts are you thinking?

Richard Dawkins, the biologist, has become something of a celebrity through his outspoken advocacy of atheism as in his new book "The God Delusion". But his approach to religion is still an idealist one.

The Dawkins approach to the question of religion is, like religion itself, an idealist one: religion is false, rationally unsustainable; morally enfeebling and a basis for hatred and division. Presumably Dawkins sees the death or meaningful diminution of religion by means of secularist persuasion just as religion hopes to resist secularisation by



what it sees as ethical persuasion.

Dawkins looks into the biological evolution of *homo sapiens* for the origin and growth of the multiplicity of religious faiths. He is speculative rather than dogmatic on the issue but much more convincing when showing how the stringency of faith-based social morality has been softened over time by an intellectual response to the social development of society. He recognises this but, unlike Marx and Engels on the question of religion, simply reports it as a phenomenon under the label of moral Zeitgeist.

Unlike Dawkins, the pioneers of scientific socialism sought to show religion as a reflex of the social organisation of society. Marx, in the Introduction to his Critique of Hegel's of *Philosophy of Right*, wrote:

"This state, this society, produces religion, a *reversed world consciousness*, because they are a *reversed world*. Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritualistic *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction... The struggle against religion is therefore immediately the fight against the other world of which religion is the spiritual *aroma*. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the *opium* of the people." (original italics)

It wasn't simply a question of religion being false, or brutal or divisive; it was a weapon of the ruling class, a bulwark in the way of the emancipation of the working class, a hurdle to be overcome in the progress to socialism nor could it be overcome while the conditions that nourished it continued to exist. Thus, the socialist sees religion as an integral part of the class struggle while the secularist sees it



simply as a harmful, false premise on which to base a system of moral rectitude. As far as capitalism's subject class is concerned, whether those who govern it or those who exploit it reject or accept faith is irrelevant; the morality of capitalism is not governed either by humanistic or religious considerations but by the constraints and compulsions of the marketplace.

Inculcating religion

Dawkins deals well, even poignantly, with the religious indoctrination of children pointing, for example, to the absurd practice of labelling young children with the faith identity of their parents or guardians. Even very young children, as young as three or four are referred to as, for example, 'Catholic', 'Protestant' or 'Muslim' children because society accepts the legitimacy of parents or guardians or clerics or teachers hijacking the innocence of children for the inculcation of beliefs more likely to be resisted if they were offered initially to an older person. Dawkins rightly calls it child abuse with ramifications sometimes even more devastating than the sexual abuse of children.

Obviously socialists agree that the indoctrination of children is a contemptible invasion of the rights of a child but, grave as it is, it is less socially heinous than the ruthless inculcation of the appalling precepts and values of capitalism -



accompanied usually by the notion of a ubiquitous Divine Policeman - to which both children and adults of all ages are remorselessly exposed.

Science and the system

Indoctrination makes a nonsense of the claim that we live in a democracy. Democracy is about choice and choice is based on information and knowledge. But nowhere in the world of capitalism are the people offered the slightest hint that there could be a way of running our society that might free us from the appalling problems that are built-in, inevitable aspects of global capitalism. Instead we have intense conditioning and thought control to the extent were we look on the utterly absurd, like war and world hunger, as natural and as inevitable as the seasons.

Capitalism and its institutions rape our consciousness and rob us of the ability to think independently. Every situation must be reasoned within the paradigm of a world in which we are beholden to a class of owners not only for our daily bread but for every aspect of our life-functions from the cradle to the grave and unless our needs are consistent with the profit needs of the owning class they will not be met.

Richard Dawkins sings the praises of science and in a general sense socialists join in the chorus. But science, possibly more than most other disciplines, is a prisoner of capitalism. The scientists have to beg at the table of the system for funding to pursue their projects; their sponsors are usually largely mammoth capitalist enterprises bent on discerning means of further enriching their directors and shareholders or capitalist governments dedicated to the overall

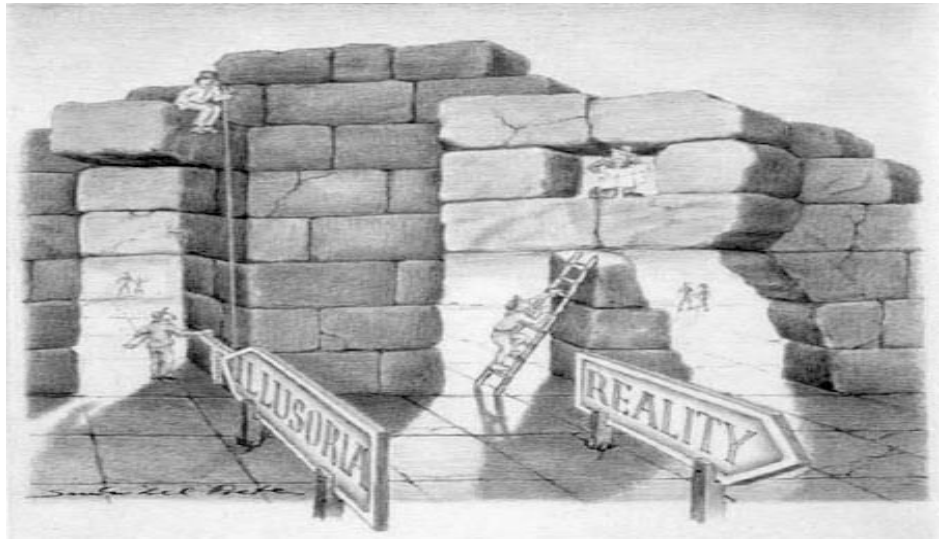


concerns of national capitalism.

Just like the rest of us, the scientist is a prisoner of the crazy logic of the system and just like the rest of us if his or her dedicated function does not hold promise of profit for those who directly or indirectly employ them, irrespective of the potential social benefits of their work, it will be denied funding.

The first phase in the struggle to end the political and economic exploitation of our class is to learn to question the thoughts we inherit from well-intentioned parents and teachers; to challenge the strictures of the priests, parsons, rabbis and mullahs and to question why in a world of potential abundance, where a parasite class of non-productive money shufflers and profit-takers are rich beyond measure, and the working class that produces all real wealth endure mere want or dire poverty. ■

Richard Montague



Co-operation not Competition

Competition, we are told, is the lifeblood of capitalism. Firms compete with each other, thus leading to lower prices and technical innovation. In a monopoly situation, without competition, there would only be one seller, so



there would be no motivation to cut prices or introduce new products. But, so the theory says, competition keeps companies on their toes and guards against complacency and inefficiency. Firms that cannot compete go to the wall, but that does not matter, as these will necessarily be offering the wrong products or charging too-high

prices. Equally, competition for workers means that wages will increase, as firms will need to offer higher wages to keep their existing staff and hire new employees.

The idea of competition is drummed into us at school. From sports days to quizzes to exams, it's a matter of competing against others. Not just a question of doing your best but of doing better than other pupils do. It's all good for us, we're told, it gives us an incentive to improve and it fits us for the wider world of work.

So supporters of capitalism claim that competition is good for us as individuals and for society as a whole, but the question is - is this an accurate picture? does competitive capitalism really deliver the goods?

We can note firstly that even under capitalism competition is limited to fairly small areas of life. Most of the time we don't compete with other people; instead, we co-operate with them, working together to achieve our aims. So people may take it in turns to drive on a long car journey, may combine their efforts to tidy up a garden, may share out various household chores. Paid employment too would be impossible without co-operating with our fellow-workers. Whether in factory, office, shop or call-centre, most work nowadays is divided up so that any one worker only performs a small part of the whole productive process. This means that working with - not against - others is an essential aspect of work. If you're snowed under with work, you may well ask another employee to help you out. Outside employment, many people spend time working in trade unions, tenants' associations, choirs, sports clubs, and a myriad other organisations that work on the basis of voluntary co-operation. In a mining disaster, do rescuers compete to see who can save the most of those trapped? No - they all work together with a single

aim, that of saving as many people as possible.

Of course there is such a thing as piece work, and salespeople who compete to earn the biggest commission. But these still involve co-operation with others, and moreover they are often high-pressure jobs, where the worker is constantly urged to work harder and harder. In short, they're not much fun, and realising this is a key to realising what's wrong with competition.

Now, even supporters of the current system would probably accept that most of the time people work together in producing things. They might even say that this is part of the essence of capitalism: people voluntarily co-operating or entering into contracts with others (such as contracts to buy their goods or labour power). Yet competition, they would repeat, is necessary too, to boost performance and efficiency and to keep prices down.

Look, though, at the bad sides of competition. For one thing, it involves workers competing with each other, trying to get a job and therefore deny the same job to someone else, or offering to do the job at a lower wage. And competition must involve winners and losers: many workers will lose out in the job market, having no job at all or one that in no way matches their abilities or aspirations.

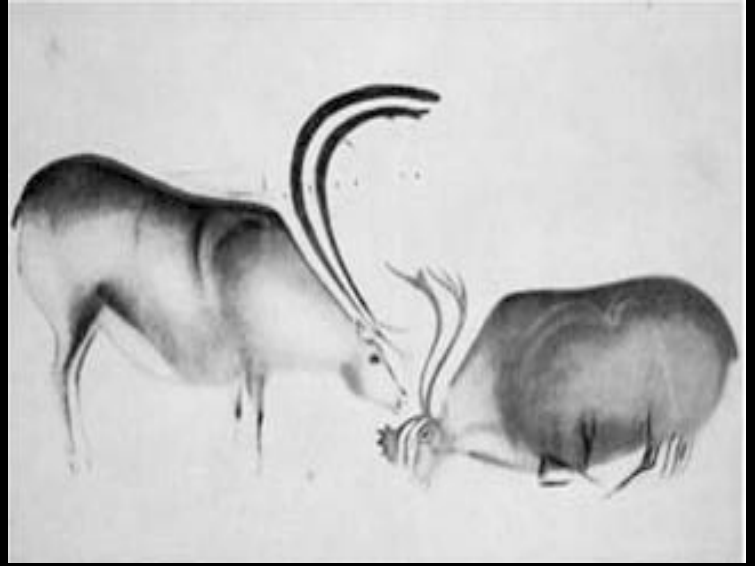
Competition in production, too, involves not looking at producing the best or safest widget. Instead, it requires producing what can be sold at a profit, probably tailored to the wallets of the prospective buyers. It also involves looking over one's shoulder at one's competitors, to see what they are doing and try to put one over on them. Inevitably much research into improved products is duplicated by national or international rivals. Someone involved in competition can never stay still, never rest on their laurels; they must always be striving to stay in the race, at least keep up with the others.

And why should anyone have to compete with other people in order to live a decent life? Socialism implies a world based on co-operation, on people all pulling in the same direction. Nobody will be forced to be competitive, rather everyone will produce for human need without fear of being out-competed. Likewise the

establishment of Socialism requires co-operation, requires the world's working class to combine in a movement aimed at getting rid of the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism. ■

Paul Bennett





Driven from Eden?

Was the Neolithic Revolution entirely a good thing?



Bushmen of the Kalahari

Some 10,000 years ago - quite recently in the four million years of human evolution - communities began to rely less on hunting, fishing, and foraging for food and settled down to plant crops and rear livestock. This change, known as the Neolithic (New Stone Age) Revolution, opened the way to landed property, city life, patriarchy, slavery, imperial conquest, and all the other delights of "civilization" - that is, class society. It has generally been seen as a great step forward for humanity. This was the view was taken Marx, who believed that the development of class society would eventually lead to a return to communal life at a higher technological level.

And yet we inherit a myth that mourns the pre-Neolithic life as a paradise lost. The Bible tells us that God drove Adam from the Garden of Eden to till the accursed ground ("it shall bring forth thorns and thistles for you") and eat bread in the sweat of his face. As for Eve, she was to bear children in sorrow and be ruled over by her husband (*Genesis 3: 17--19, 23*). If only they had played their cards right!

So what was life really like for our prehistoric ancestors? There are two kinds of evidence. We can learn quite a lot about the material aspects of their existence - what they ate, what tools they used, how often they moved camp, how healthy they were - from the archeological record, although its interpretation is sometimes open to dispute. We can also use information collected in modern times about people still living by hunting and gathering, such as Australian aborigines and South African bushmen, making due allowance for change in environmental conditions. Thus, many contemporary Stone Age groups have been pushed out into "marginal" semi-desert environments. In prehistoric times people lived under a wide range of natural conditions, often much more favorable to human life than the Kalahari or the Australian outback.

Even in these marginal environments, however, surviving hunters and gatherers live quite an easy life, working on average just two to four hours a day. Many daylight hours are spent socializing, dancing or napping. (See Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, Tavistock Publications, 1974.) Their diet is adequate in quantity, varied,

and nutritious. For instance, the Kalahari bushmen eat over a hundred varieties of plant, including fruits, berries, nuts, gums, roots and bulbs, leafy greens, beans, and melons. Archeological evidence suggests that our Stone Age ancestors were also generally well fed and healthy. Late Paleolithic skeletons from Greece and Turkey show an average height of 5' 9" for men and 5' 5" for women, as compared to 5' 3" and 5' 0" for skeletons from a later agricultural period (3,000 BC).

At least until very recently, agriculture entailed considerably more work than hunting and gathering. Moreover, as God warned Adam, it was more exhausting work than the activities it replaced. Farmers have typically depended heavily on one or two species of grain or tuber (wheat, maize, rice, potatoes). If the crop failed they starved: recall the potato blight that caused the great Irish famine. As well as being less reliable, their food supply was poorer in nutritional quality, with more carbohydrates and less protein and vitamins.

In addition, agriculture was also bad for people's health. Dense settlement facilitated the transmission of disease and made it more difficult to dispose of human waste away from the living area. The clearing of woodland for farming created habitats for mosquitoes.

Why then did our ancestors give up their customary way of life and switch to agriculture? Mark Nathan Cohen (*The Food Crisis in Prehistory*, Yale University Press, 1977) argues that for a long time they knew how to plant, weed, and even irrigate crops, and, like many Amazonian groups today, did so selectively on a small scale. Not only did they hunt, fish and forage; they gardened too. But they chose not to farm until forced to do so by the gradually rising pressure of population on resources. For all



its disadvantages, agriculture can yield more food per unit area, thereby supporting a denser population.

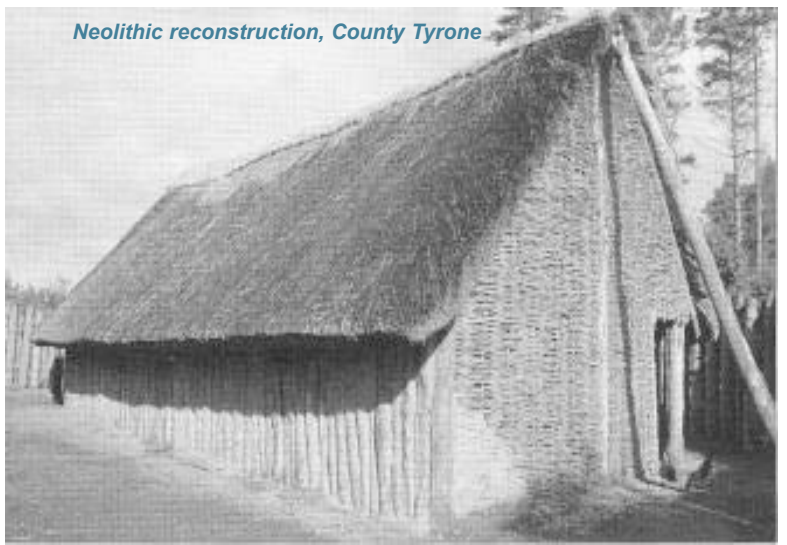
Indeed, who would voluntarily exchange the excitement of the hunt, the easygoing companionship of the foraging expedition, or the creative experimentation of rainforest gardening for the monotonous, backbreaking toil of tilling the soil?

The prehistoric development of gardening skills demonstrates that technological progress did occur in "primitive" communities and, moreover, that it tended to take more ecologically sustainable forms than it has in class society. Thus the transition to agriculture did not mark the beginning of technological progress.

Some have suggested that the Neolithic Revolution may have been socially regressive in yet another sense. Contemporary Stone Age groups are culturally open. Intermarriage is common across the boundaries not only of local bands but also of broader speech communities. Among bushmen, "individuals are free to move from group to group,

partake of local resources, and participate in whatever cooperative social efforts occur wherever they are" (Cohen, p. 62). The same will apply, we hope, in a future socialist society. In the view of many though not all prehistorians, the wide geographical distribution of identical sets of tools (e.g., the Acheulian tool complex) indicates a similar cultural openness in the Stone Age. Only in the period immediately preceding the shift to agriculture did Stone Age society fracture into closed "tribal" groups.

Neolithic reconstruction, County Tyrone



The argument, however, that the Neolithic Revolution and the class societies that emerged from it have been socially regressive in all respects cannot be sustained. Their cultural, scientific and technological achievements cannot be denied. But as we contemplate the last few millennia, full of suffering, futility, and moral and ecological degradation, we may well wonder whether the losses outweigh the gains.

Will the establishment of socialism justify in retrospect the painful path that led to it? Socialism, unfortunately, is a much more uncertain prospect than Marx assumed. If we don't awake in time from the nightmare of class society, the Neolithic Revolution will have to be regarded as the crucial event that triggered the fatal degeneration of our species and the final devastation of our planet. After all, in the Stone Age we already had socialism, even though it was at a fairly low technological level.

To save the species and the planet, what we need is a return to the communal life of those days but at a higher technological level. ■

Stefan

Agriculture - backbreaking



Cooking the Books (1)

Stating the obvious

Edmund Phelps won the 2006 Nobel prize for economics for research into the interplay between prices, unemployment and inflation expectations. A press release gave the reasons:

"Phelps suggested that in setting prices and negotiating wages, employers and workers make judgements about future inflation that in turn influence the inflation outcome. As a consequence, the long-run rate of unemployment

is not affected by inflation but only determined by the functioning of the labour market. The academy said the theoretical framework Phelps developed in the late 1960s helped economists understand the causes of soaring prices and unemployment in the 1970s. Phelps's work has fundamentally altered our views on how the macroeconomy operates."

(http://money.cnn.com/2006/10/09/news/newsmakers/phelps_nobel_reut/index.htm)

Phelps's explanation for inflation amounts to the circular argument that rising prices cause rising prices. This doesn't really explain anything about contemporary capitalism and it doesn't explain those periods of capitalist history when the general price level (including the price known as a wage or salary) was stable or falling.

The real explanation is to be found outside the circle of rising

prices, in the government issuing more currency than is needed for economic transactions to take place. Whenever and wherever currency inflation has taken place, rising prices have been the result. It is of course true that once the psychology of inflationary expectations is established, employers and unions will want to take into account future inflation rates when determining wage levels. But the real underlying explanation (currency inflation) is radically different from Phelps's superficial view that rising prices cause rising prices.

Up to the 1970s the ruling theory in economics was the Phillips Curve. This basically said that there was a trade-off between inflation and unemployment: we could have higher inflation and lower unemployment or lower inflation and higher unemployment. Until the 1970s, that is, when we had both rising inflation and rising unemployment. That discredited the Phillips Curve. But what would economists tell the ruling class now? According to Phelps, the message is: "unemployment is not affected by inflation." Brilliant! Give that man a Nobel prize! But even this isn't quite right, since it is possible for inflation to get seriously out of control, causing economic dislocation and rising unemployment as in Weimar Germany in the 1920s.

Phelps is right to say that the long-run rate of unemployment is determined by the functioning of the labour market. But this is something we have said for many years - well before Phelps. Can we have our Nobel prize now?

Parting with Leninism



Extracts from an email received from a reader who has recently broken with a Leninist organisation, the New Communist Party (publishers of the 'New Worker')

"Act in haste and repent at leisure." So runs the old adage and it is true for me, at least in respect of my joining the *New Worker* readers' group. Actually, I was debating whether or not to continue my subscription at all and when I finally decided to do so I thought it might be best to become more actively involved. However, the more I read the more aware I became of too much that is indefensible.

By no means does this apply to everything. Indeed, Ray Jones' article, "*What have communists got against capitalism*", was a clear and succinct summary of Marxism by which the case was well stated. I could hardly disagree with it and shall keep it for reference purposes. It is with the espousal of certain causes I must firstly take issue. Jones

lists a number of immediate causes to be pursued: "...better wages and conditions, better education, better health services, better housing, a better environment, against war, against authoritarianism and injustice and for more democracy (workers' power), and against racism, sexism and homophobia, which can divide workers..."

Which brings me to the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea, i.e. North Korea] where some of these things may have been achieved, at least in part, but many are non-existent. Including the word "Democratic" in the state's title does not mean that state is so. In what meaningful sense can the word democratic be applied to North Korea? How can a party, the NCP, proclaim opposition to authoritarianism



North Korean soldiers, not keen on democracy, but they like marching ...

and yet ally itself with one of the most authoritarian states in the world, not forgetting Vietnam, another country in which the popular will finds no real expression? I'm sure there are all manner state bodies supposedly dedicated to demotic purposes, but the Dear Leader and his beribboned and medal-festooned generals seem unconcerned with any such institutions.

The use of the word "progressive" in the *New Worker* appears to be as part of an oxymoron as in, "progressive governments like those of Iraq (pre-invasion) and Syria" (Editorial, 20 October) As these two administrations were largely secular in the context of the Middle East, women did indeed achieve a measure of emancipation denied in more Islamic states. But this was within authoritarian states in which opposition was (is) ruthlessly suppressed and the use of torture commonplace. Both these states had (and probably have) imperialist ambitions of their own. Not on the scale of the USA, admittedly, nor do they have the military where with all, but that does not prevent them being aggressive states. To use the word progressive in relation to Baathist parties is to deprive it of any meaning or worse. Like Alice's Humpty Dumpty, it

means whatever you want it to mean. How can it be that communists are prepared to give support to some of the most reactionary regimes and movements in the world?

The same editorial ran, "The Muslim community is under attack because it is almost entirely opposed to Anglo-American imperialism's 'war against terror' which is no more than a war against Muslims." Capitalism, and therefore Imperialism, does not give a damn for religion, for any race or creed. Profit alone is its motivation and that, in a competitive world, means geopolitical control over markets and resources. Of course it will use differences between people, race, religion, football (useful worldwide to reinforce national allegiances), to divide and weaken potential opposition. This can be clearly seen in Iraq at the moment, where there is a far greater toll of the indigenous population due to inter-Muslim strife than is presently due to coalition military action. In fact, one group of Muslims, the Sufis who were viciously persecuted by Saddam Hussein's "progressive" regime, were freed from their terrible incarceration following the fall of the Baathists.

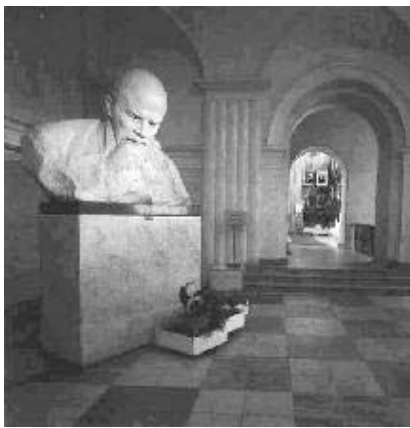
Having read the above the obvious questions are, why did I renew my subscription to the *New Worker* and why did I join



... and shooting

the reader's group? Having posed them both to myself I conclude that I was trying to hang on to something that has been a significant part of my adult life. Even since I first became involved in politics in my later teens I have been ideologically torn between two quite incompatible understandings of Marxism, the Leninist model and the very much more libertarian approach of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

The attraction of the Leninist model is that it offers the seeming possibility of immediate action and demands with the ultimate goal, Communism, in mind. But, however laudable they may be reforms become the political objective in themselves, they



are the reason the Trade Unions established the Labour Party. They are not and cannot be stepping-stones to the revolution. A revolution to vanquish capitalism and establish socialism can only happen through the active agency of the working class; it cannot be carried out by a vanguard party on its behalf. This is the Leninist fallacy, for if the working class is so motivated it does not require some pre-existing party to act as its surrogate. If a need for a disciplined vanguard party exists then the working class is not ready to seize the moment, the vast majority are still integrated into the capitalist ideological mindset. Then, should the vanguard party take power it inevitably ends up ruling a reluctant working class, the dictatorship over (not of) the proletariat, no matter that the members of that party are dedicated and sincere. Then the supposed final goal becomes enabler of tragedy.

For years I've intellectually, and arrogantly, justified the actions of Stalin, Mao Zedong, Enver Hoxha and their ilk in terms of their life and death struggle for socialism with capitalist encirclement and intrigue. I have argued that the crimes laid at their door were largely trumped up and exaggerated or caused by a reaction to imperialist pressure. I have been little more than a left wing David Irving,

doing injury to history, denying the victims, for the cause. A cause that was always doomed to fail when Lenin found himself master of a largely war broken peasant country which led him to establish a state that would become ever more entrenched rather than wither away. Trotsky would have made no difference had he assumed control after Lenin's death as he was of the same authoritarian ilk. The state capitalism that subsequently developed did serve the historical purpose of sweeping away feudalism in Russia and developed a working class that can now play its part in choosing socialism. As is the way with all forms of capitalism, state as well as free market, this was achieved at a dreadful cost paid by the workers.

Frustrating though it undoubtedly is, there can be no short cut to socialism. Either the vast majority decide to embrace it or it does not occur. Socialism is not inevitable, the conditions are ripe for it, but if workers the world over fail to implement it, then there is also the possibility of barbarism. Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, all serving as paradigms of one dreadful possible future. Promoting the socialist cause is undoubtedly hampered by its association with totalitarian regimes both past and present or with the reformism of Labour, a seeming easier option of socialism without much of an effort, that has undoubtedly brought benefits only for them to be whittled away in the interests of profit.

Our world is faced by major threats from war and environmental disaster, both fuelled by the insatiable appetite capitalism has. There is a desperate need for socialism, but it's not to be found behind the barbed wire in North Korea. It is incumbent on all who award themselves the epithet communist to place their hands on their hearts and say, to themselves as much as to anyone else, whether they really see a future for humanity in such a place.



Poor woman's banker

This year's Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to Muhammad Yunus, an economics lecturer and banker from Bangladesh. The spread of "micro-banking", which he thought up and put into practice, was judged to have contributed to world peace.

Leaving aside whether he should have got the Economics rather than the Peace prize, what is micro-banking? Actually, it is not all that different from ordinary banking in that it is still based on a bank lending out money that has been previously deposited with it. The difference lies in who the money is lent to. The Grameen bank, which Yunus set up in 1976, lends to poor self-employed people.

The established banks in Bangladesh had shunned such people because, being so poor, they had nothing to offer as collateral for any loan and so were not considered credit-worthy. In order to start up or keep themselves in activity, poor self-employed people had to resort to local money-lenders who charged usurious rates of interest. A typical example would be the woman in the story about how bank got set up:

"In the village of Jobra, Dr Yunus met a woman who made bamboo stools. Because she had no assets and was unable to borrow from conventional sources, she had to resort to the money lenders. For each stool, she borrowed the equivalent of 15p to buy the raw bamboo. After repaying at extortionate rates of interest she made barely 1p on each stool. This woman was hard-working and talented but was being held back by a lack of access to finance. Inspired by her story, Dr Yunus started a series of experiments and lent tiny sums of his own money to villagers. They used the money to set up small businesses such as basket weaving and raising chickens. He found that his borrowers - mainly women - repaid in full and on time" (*Times*, 1 September).

What Yunus had shown was that the poor self-employed can be credit-worthy. Banks based on his principles lend out very small sums for a year which have to be repaid, with interest (at just above the ordinary banks' rate), from current sales. While a means of freeing the self-employed in countries like Bangla Desh from the clutches of the money-lenders, micro-banking is not a solution to global poverty. Not only because not everybody in such countries could become a basket weaver or a chicken farmer or a maker of bamboo stools, but because those the bank lends to remain poor and dependant on the vagaries of the market.

Nor is there anything anti-capitalist about the scheme. *The Times* described Yunus in an editorial (14 October) as "the Adam Smith of the Poor" and their correspondent in Dhaka reported:

"Professor Yunus insisted that he was not against the free market, but that he wanted the market to be free for everyone. 'I am a free-market guy and even the poor should be part of the free market', he said. 'Two thirds of the population of the world are not able to participate, so it is not free'".

The way the Grameen bank works also confirms the Marxian view that banks cannot create credit out of nothing. Like other banks it can only lend what has been deposited with it. If certain banking theories were correct - that if you deposit £1 in a bank, it can then lend out £9 rather than only 90p - then Professor Yunus would have been able to help the poor self-employed of Bangladesh by a mere stroke of the pen. But if he had tried to run his bank on this theory it would have rapidly gone bankrupt, and the only prize he would have got would have been a booby prize for either stupidity or naivety.



Cooking the Books (2)

Political drama

Pieter Lawrence: *The Last Conflict*
Booksurge, 2006, £10

One of the more pleasing aspects of the last couple of decades of socialist activity has been the proliferation of books written by socialists, previously quite a rare phenomenon. Almost all of these books have been non-fiction, either putting the case for socialism directly or else discussing the socialist movement itself. This book, by long-standing Socialist Party member Pieter Lawrence, is somewhat different. It is a work of fiction - and an interesting one too, in that while it is a gripping political novel set in Britain it doesn't mention any political parties, and introduces the idea of socialism without ever explicitly identifying it as such.

Without giving too much away to future readers, it is about how a British government beset by economic difficulties and strikes handles a political crisis of a different sort - emerging news of a large comet that is heading towards Earth. Over time, it appears that if the Earth will not be directly hit by the comet, it will pass by closely enough to cause a missile bombardment from space. Fragments of rock would be detached by the comet hurtling through the Earth's atmosphere in the type of future scenario envisaged by some current astronomers, and often argued to be the real cause of the disappearance of the dinosaurs from Earth tens of millions of years ago.

The novel focuses on the attempts by the government to cover-up news of the impending disaster and then, when mass public panic and disorder arises, to initiate a massive programme of civil defence involving the creation of deep shelters for the population, including the conversion of the London underground system.

Much of the action revolves around some of the main characters in the government and their thinking about how to handle the emerging crisis. As well as maintaining social control, not the least of their problems is a financial one. At a time when the government is already under severe financial pressure, the paid construction of a huge network of deep shelters across the country would be ruinous and logistically impossible. The government's solution is to turn to voluntary labour, of the sort that had emerged during the economic crisis and strike wave when people had been encouraged by the government to volunteer to keep the hospitals and other essential services going. It soon emerges, however, that this sort of piecemeal voluntary labour is not enough, as materials need to be purchased and production facilities harnessed quickly and on a mammoth scale if the civil defences are to be constructed in time. So voluntary labour is generalised and supplemented by a credit note system and the requisitioning of factories, building materials, land and so on.

Such is the scale of the task however, that the majority of the population becomes involved and the credit note system - initially designed as a temporary measure - becomes meaningless as the government would never be able to pay back the massive credits owed to the working population and owners of capital when life returned to capitalist 'normality'. The only solution is for the government - after much internal discussion

and dissension - to decree a temporary cashless economy while the civil defences are built. There is a suspension of all paid economic activity and bank accounts, etc are frozen, with the population being able to directly access the goods and services produced by voluntary labour, assisted by a Second World War-type rationing system for some products. All of this occurs alongside massive campaigns and mobilisations from the general population desperate that nothing (whether shortage of resources or government reticence) should halt the vital work of civil defence, a programme which literally appears to be the only chance of human survival.

In this way, the novel cleverly introduces the idea of a society based on voluntary labour without wages, money and prices as the only way in which society as a whole can pull together sufficiently to direct the largest construction programme in the history of the planet, drawing on the type of 'wartime spirit' previously evident during the Blitz. To what extent this programme is successful, and for what happens when the comet finally passes by, you will need to read the book.

As a novel, the narrative is well-written and fast-paced. Indeed, even if you are not a socialist it is an exceptionally good read and this is one of its strengths. It has been written with a view to introducing the idea of a socialist society to people without the usual terminology (or, in fact, much political jargon as a whole) so that the idea slowly creeps up on the reader as they progress through the book. The characterisations are strong and believable, and help to anchor the story as one about humanity and people's very fight for survival. In this respect it is compelling and, at times, gripping too.

The artistic licence of the fiction writer is called on only minimally, mainly perhaps with the somewhat UK-centred plotline to what is, by definition, a world phenomenon and crisis. Also, the work gives small and almost subliminal hints that it was written some time ago as in some respects the general political 'feel' is of Britain in the 1970s, before the internet and satellite TV, and in an era when Prime Ministers still made broadcasts to the nation pipe in hand. Indeed, whether some of the communication blackouts imposed by the government at various times in the story are achievable in today's e-society is a moot point, though again this doesn't seem to be a huge issue for the purposes of the plot and its underlying message.

The storyline of *The Last Conflict* is so cleverly woven, with the plot developing in clear stages, and the characterisation is so strong, that this is a work that would lend itself to other genres quite easily. At present, the physical binding of the book by the current publishers could be better and nothing would be more fitting for the book's wider popularisation than if a TV dramatisation of the novel was what made it known to a mass audience. To this end, it is to be hoped that the book will find itself in the hands of someone with the opportunity and vision to put this into effect, because it could without doubt, and without a hint of exaggeration, make for one of the best political dramas ever shown on British television.

DAP

Early days of globalisation

Nick Robins: *The Corporation that Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational*
Pluto Press, £15.99

I often gauge how much I have enjoyed a book by the amount of highlighting and marginal notes I make in pencil. This book, like many on my shelves, will horrify those who prize pristine, unmarked first editions.

On 31 December 1600 a precursor of the modern transnational corporation came into existence. Its pioneering techniques in the field of trade and commerce, and downright murder and corruption, preceded by centuries the noxious business practices that we associate with today's all-powerful corporations, many of whom have a higher turn over than small countries.

This book presents as a meticulous account of perhaps the most powerful corporation that ever lived, tracing how it came into existence, how it operated, its inner structure, the role of its own armies in its rise to supremacy, its part in the Bengal Famine when 10 million died as a result of the Company's market manipulation, its militaristic role in the Opium Wars, its part in the Indian Mutiny and the Boston Tea Party and how, for the last twenty years of its existence, it ruled India as an agent of the British Empire. When it comes to downright exploitation, corruption, slaughter and sheer negligence and indifference to the suffering of others, perhaps no company that ever existed comes near the East India Company in its ruthless pursuit of profit, whilst refashioning the world commercial order in the interests of privilege and power for hundreds of years to come.

In its time the company had many critics, most notably Edmund Burke, "the real champion of India's identity", Adam Smith and Karl Marx. Burke fought long and hard to impeach the Company's Governor General Warren Hastings for the devastation wrought on India in its endless search for profit.

Commencing his opening speech at Westminster Hall in February 1788, Burke said:

"I impeach him in the name of the people of India, whose laws, rights and liberties, he has subverted, whose properties he has destroyed, whose country he has laid waste and desolate . . . I impeach him in the name of human nature itself, which he has cruelly outraged, injured and oppressed, in both sexes, in very age, rank, situation and conditions of life."

Despite Burke's opening four day tirade against Hastings - one of the longest opening speeches in history - during which women were carried out fainting, at which the Speaker was "rendered speechless" and at which spectators were willing to pay u50 for a seat, despite an ensuing trial that lasted from February 1787 to April 1795, Hastings was acquitted.

Considering the Company's operations for the *New York Daily Tribune* in the summer of 1853, Marx noted five characteristics: " . . . a permanent financial deficit, a regular over-supply of wars, and no supply at all of public works, an abominable system of taxation, and a no less abominable system, of justice and law.."

Satirising the Company's administrative system, he commented how

there existed "no government by which so much is written and so little done." Marx furthermore viewed the company as a tool of British capitalism plc in India, observing how "the aristocracy wanted to conquer it, the moneyocracy wanted to plunder it and the millocracy to undersell it".

The Second Opium War was, in Marx's view, attributable to the Company's operations in the East and its insistence that it had the right to swamp China with drugs in the name of profit, regardless of the addiction-induced misery its trade created or how the Chinese authorities felt. He wrote:

"While openly preaching free trade in poison, it secretly defends the monopoly of its manufacture. Whenever we look closely into the nature of British free trade, monopoly is pretty generally found to, lie at the bottom of its freedom".

In eight carefully researched chapters, Robins traces the Company's operations from its inception as a trader in spices to its role in running the Indian sub-continent on behalf of the British crown, withholding, one imagines, very little regardless how gruesome, and there indeed are some stomach-churning passages.

In the final chapter, his analysis masterly done, Robins, contemplating the state of corporate play today, reflects how the Company's legacy reveals the importance of taking on the mega-corporations who presently rampage across the planet unhindered, and this, for socialists, is the book's one failing.

Robins' remedy for curbing corporate power is simple:

"First of all, its market power and political influence must be limited . . . Next, stringent rules are needed to ensure that management and investors do not use the corporation as a tool for their short-term interests . . . And, finally, clear and forcible systems of justice have to be in place to hold the corporation to account for damage to society and the environment."

Thus, a brilliant attack on unchecked power in the pursuit of profit is marred by the simple request that the capitalist class behaves and shows a little more respect when carrying out its obscene business, and that the executive arm of capitalism - government - hurries to the rescue of society and the natural environment. Smiley-faced capitalism is, for Robins, the only remedy. Warren Hastings laughs in his grave.

All said, if you're into the study of corporate power gone mad, read this.

John Bissett

Not socialism

Randhir Singh: *Crisis of Socialism*. Amit Atwal. 2006. 1087 pages. £29.99.

In Europe most Leninists are probably Trotskyists. In Asia they would seem to be Maoists. Randhir Singh falls into this category, arguing that although Stalin made mistakes and what he called socialism wasn't socialism, Russia finally became a fully-fledged new class society ruled by a state bourgeoisie only in 1964, when Brezhnev took over from Khrushchev. Russia went capitalist in 1991. Since then China has gone that way too. Only Cuba and North Korea have not yet gone capitalist, and only Cuba is on the road to socialism.

An Inconvenient Truth (2005), directed by Davis Guggenheim

This film is advertised as 'a passionate and inspirational look at one man's commitment to expose the myths and misconceptions that surround global warming and inspire actions to prevent it'. That one man is Al Gore: company director, author and professional politician for the Democratic Party of the USA. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that a substantial portion of this so-called documentary feels more like a political broadcast. The film is based on footage of a lecture on climate change given to a sympathetic audience, interspersed with short asides on Gore's career as a professional politician, his privileged upbringing, his personal life and accounts of him driving and flying around the world to lecture on the effects of fossil fuel usage.

Gore presents quantitative and anecdotal evidence for climate change in an easily digestible way. Some time is spent on the history and methodology of atmospheric carbon dioxide and temperature measurements. The data is clearly presented in graphs, diagrams and photographs but Gore doesn't distinguish between measurements and extrapolations. Some of the graphs are presented in a way that magnifies small differences in data, and effects of climate change that are speculations are presented as inevitable with no reference to the likelihood of their occurrence or other theories.

At one point Gore seems to be arguing that Ice Ages are caused solely by declining greenhouse gases; he says 'when there is more carbon dioxide the temperature gets warmer'. He does not point out that among the theories for the causes of Ice Ages changes to the composition of the atmosphere are seen as just one component, or even as a result of the Ice Age not a cause itself.

As the film progresses Gore increasingly overstates the effects, or evidence for the effects, of climate change. Species loss, re-emergence of suppressed diseases and the emergence of new diseases such as SARS are all implied to be a result of climate change without evidence. The importance of the climate change issue does not need to be exaggerated.

In an aside, Gore reflects on his time in Congress promoting action on climate change, he laments: 'the struggles, the victories that aren't really victories, the defeats that aren't really defeats, they can serve to magnify the significance of some trivial step forward'. He blames the present administration of the state and their links with the oil and gas lobby. For Socialists it is obvious that the government will rarely go against the interests of capital, especially a section of the capitalist class as powerful as the energy industry.

Gore states that climate change 'is really not a political issue so much as a moral issue'. His remedy for the problem is to advise people to exercise their power as

That's what this book argues but we doubt that many people will have the patience to read through 1000 pages portraying Lenin, as like Marx, an advocate of the democratic self-emancipation of the working class, interspersed with favourable comments on Mao and Stalin.

ALB

consumers in choosing energy efficient appliances and cars and use 'our political processes, in our democracy', and he just happens to be a professional politician concerned about climate change. He states it is a false dichotomy to say that the choice is economy or the environment, we can have both: 'If we do the right thing, then we're going to create a lot of wealth and we're going to create a lot of jobs . . .'. The details of this were left sketchy but it seems that hope triumphs over experience and he still has faith in capitalism.

In conclusion Gore states, to rapturous applause, that 'We have everything we need save perhaps political will . . . We have the ability to do this . . . The solutions are in our hands'. He is correct, but for him this means more of the same old futile politicking. Socialists realise that profit will always be the priority for capitalism, the solution in our hands is to bring the means of production under direct democratic control so that everybody can take part in deciding how global resources are used.

This documentary film follows a novel format and is visually impressive. It is a good introduction to the basics of human-made climate change problem, but is tarnished by the lack of convincing solutions.

PDH

World Socialist Literature



World Socialist Review: the journal of the World Socialist Movement in the United States. £1.30 including postage.
Socialist Banner: the quarterly journal of the World Socialist Movement in Africa. £1.00 including postage.

From The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.
 Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.



SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX
 An index of articles in 2005 can be obtained by sending two first-class stamps to Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Obituaries

LEN FEINZING

Len Feinzing (also known in the party as Lenny Fenton) died in October. Born in 1917, he joined the World Socialist Party of the US in 1936 and was an active member of Boston Local until there was no more local to be active in. He was part of the core group who continued monthly meetings to mail out the *Socialist Standards* and keep the bare bones of a socialist movement alive during the 1980s. After the renaissance that the WSP began to experience in 1987, he continued to take part in every activity except those requiring computer skills. Lenny's greatest contribution to the organization was as a speaker, both on the soapbox and indoors. He was arguably the best debater in the WSP, frequently impressing large audiences in debates with groups from Harvard, MIT and Brandies. He also spoke on Local Boston's radio program during the late 1960s and early 70s. He visited Britain on a number of occasions, the last time being 2003. Comrade Feinzing

served for many years on both the NAC and the Editorial Committee of the *Western Socialist*, the journal of the American and Canadian parties. He also made it his personal project to increase the circulation of the *Western Socialist* dramatically during the 1950s (not at all an easy task in that period of history!) by instituting a successful nationwide Library Campaign. His life was long and productive. He will be long remembered.

BILL ROSS

Glasgow branch are sad to report the death of our comrade Bill Ross. Bill came across the Socialist Party at an outdoor meeting at the Mound in Edinburgh in the summer of 1965. Within months he had joined Glasgow branch. He was a larger than life figure who had left school at 15 years of age and had been a merchant seaman for many years. When he came in contact with the party he had graduated from Drama College and was already appearing on stage at the Edinburgh Festival. Within a short time Bill was himself speaking for the party both indoors and

outdoors including a spell in London when he was working there. Later on when he found the stage too precarious an occupation he worked for many years for the Glasgow Parks Department where he was very active in trade union affairs. Bill was a voracious reader and was especially interested in scientific subjects. He was a good example of the self-taught worker, although having had a very basic academic career he had a wide knowledge of astro-physics and evolution, often giving branch talks on such subjects. He was a warm, friendly human being with a good sense of humour and his speciality was in taking popular songs and re-writing parodies. Thus The Lady is a Tramp became That's Why the Worker is a Slave and the words of Who Wants to be a Millionaire became - "Have you heard of the SPGB. We want a world without poverty. Well, did you ever. What a swell party this is." This is a sad time for all his Glasgow comrades but especially so for his wife and beloved comrade Terry. He will be greatly missed.

RD

Hungary and Suez - Hope Amidst Tragedy



The governments of Israel, Britain, France and Russia, when they resorted to war in October 1956 in pursuit of their own separate objectives, have at the same time struck a decisive blow to achieve something they never sought and are hardly aware of. Their tanks and bombers in a few days of destruction have helped to shatter the most hampering illusion of our generation, an illusion that has held back multitudes from taking the first step towards a real understanding of the problems facing the human race.

This illusion was the belief, held with equal fervour by democrats and Communists, and on both sides of the Iron Curtain, that there are "two worlds," essentially different in arms and conduct.

On the one side the democrats and Labourites of the Western world believed that they and their rulers are guided by a superior moral code, are inherently against brutality, are committed to "law not war," and to United Nations, are incapable of naked aggression to further their interests.

On the other side were the Communists and their followers, who believed with equal sincerity

that Russia, by virtue of being a "Socialist" country, is free from and superior to the sordid imperialism and colonialism of the West, and utterly incapable of opposing the aspirations of ordinary workers.

Now the foundations of both beliefs have been smashed into fragments. Sincere men and women in both camps are horrified and heartbroken to discover in one revealing flash that the men they revered and the men they reviled behave in exactly the same criminal way; that the Edens and the Khrushchevs are blood brothers after all, worshippers of the same capitalist god of violence and war. The sickening dismay of those who trusted Eden, "the friend of United Nations," is only equalled by that of Communists who see Russian tanks smashing down Hungarian workers. For both groups the one thing that could not happen has happened.

(From front page article by 'H.', *Socialist Standard*, December 1956)

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



The Queen speaks - sort of

Through an amazing, not to say unique, set of circumstances, Greasy Pole has come into possession of an early draft of the Queen's Speech to the nation on Christmas Day. As usual, the speech makes an impressive human document, covering a wide range of vital issues with the customary insight, compassion and courage. However readers must bear in mind that this is the first draft of the speech; when the broadcast takes place it may turn out that some changes have been made.

Tradition

Speaking to you this Christmas Day, I am humbly aware that I am carrying on a tradition begun by my grandfather and carried on by my father. We are all agreed that tradition plays a vital part in our lives - we all find comfort and security in the confidence that things will stay as they are even if it would be much better to change them. Of course as the Queen I am more in favour of this than most people - after all it is tradition that is often used as a clinching argument for keeping me and my family where we are. For so many of you, my viewers, it would not come amiss if you had less regard for tradition and more for thinking about re-organising society. But we won't go into that right now.

To begin, let us look at what my government have been doing and what they intend to do between now and next December 25. (You must not be misled by the words "my government", into thinking that I tell Tony Blair and the rest what to do. The opposite is true; that is why I am speaking to you today). My government continue to fight wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which seem to have no end in sight. You may recall that Mr. Blair and the other leaders assured us that Iraq would be a quick, clean business and not another Vietnam. They did not remind us then that the late President Johnson had promised the American people that Vietnam would not be another Korea. What future war, we may ask, will be justified on the grounds that it will not be another Iraq? And how many will be killed while this is going on?

Rebuild

This is not say that it has been all bad news from Iraq. If we can forget the soldiers who have been killed and their grieving families and the tens of thousands Iraqi corpses which testify to the murderous efficacy, if not the unfailing accuracy, of American and British weaponry, there is another side to the story. Bechtel, a big and powerful American engineering company, has just finished a contract to repair the water, power and sewage system in Iraq, supposedly to the benefit of the people there. For this Bechtel were paid \$2.3 billion by the American government. And what has been the result? Well 52 Bechtel employees were killed during the work. Anything else? The electricity comes on for only a few hours a day, for much of the people there is no clean water supply and the sewage is largely untreated. In a recent issue of the *New York Times* a professor of economics wrote that "By any material measure, Iraqis are worse off than they were under Saddam".

Crime is another matter which my government are vigorously tackling. Theft may be all very well if it is the kind which allows one class to have access to most of the wealth but not when someone tries to help themselves outside the law. Violence is admirable when it is the clean, clinical type guided out of the skies of Iraq by trained people in uniforms but it is unacceptable when it is a few rowdies on the street after closing time. So Mr. Blair's ministers are cracking down on it; they are planning to bring in more laws which will enable courts to pass longer sentences on offenders. This will almost certainly mean more people being sent to prison and I confess I am a little puzzled by this; the government wants tougher sentences because of the high re-conviction rate for released prisoners and it seems rather odd that in these circumstances there should be plans to imprison more people.

Farepak

We can all remember Mr. Blair's fine speech when he declared his intention of being "tough on the causes of crime" - meaning a crack down on problems like poverty in families, which is a standing incentive to people to take what they see as the short cut of crime to alleviate the pressures they are under. As part of this crackdown the government set up the Sure Start scheme, heralded by Mr. Blair as "...an idea (that) would lift all the boats on a rising tide". But now he has had to admit that It has not worked like that; he now says that "...Their problems are so multiple...these families then end up having five or six organisations dealing with them, but no one is actually dealing with them. If we are to change that we need a different way for government to operate". (Of course he did not really mean that last bit - governments "operate" as needed by this social system, with its poverty and doomed schemes like Sure Start).

An example of this was the collapse of the company Farepak. Now I don't need to have anything to do with Farepak because it was a firm which promised to help people with very little money to save up, a little at a time, for Christmas so that they could afford the turkey and the drink and food and the presents for the kids. It is not clear how many people were impressed by this idea; one estimate is that about 150,000 families were involved - another estimate is that their "savings" amounted to about £41 million. And all this was in the expectation that come Christmas they would get a nice hamper or some high street vouchers. Except that, like Sure Start, it did not work like that because Farepak's parent company - European Home Retail (EHR) - was in trouble over their overdraft with Halifax Bank of Scotland. When it turned out that EHR was using the savers' money to pay off their bank loan Farepak collapsed, leaving those hopeful families facing a very bleak Christmas.

HBOS blamed EHR for failing to have a "viable solution" to Farepak's problems. The chairman of EHR, Clive Thompson, retaliated that Farepak had been "hung out to dry" by the bank.

Merry Christmas

But the spirit of Christmas, which I am recommending to you today as the way out of the world's problems, is not entirely dead. Clive Thompson unburdened himself on BBC Radio, saying "I feel very deeply for all those people who have been hurt by the collapse, in particular those who saved for Christmas - which has been ruined". These charitable words were offered by someone who is a past president of the Confederation of British Industry and who has sat on the boards of six FTSE companies. Not to be outdone, the managing director of Farepak, Gilodi-Johnson weighed in: "I am really gutted that everybody has lost out like this". Well yes.

So there it is, this Christmas 2006. While one class in society enjoys a securely affluent life style the other endures the kind of poverty which sometimes requires them to put together scraps of money in order to survive a paltry holiday. Huge corporations make massive profits from war and the ensuing social strife. All of this at a time when we are told that this is a season of peace and goodwill. It suits me and the class I represent, to believe that. But you?

Merry Christmas. ■

Suckers.

IVAN

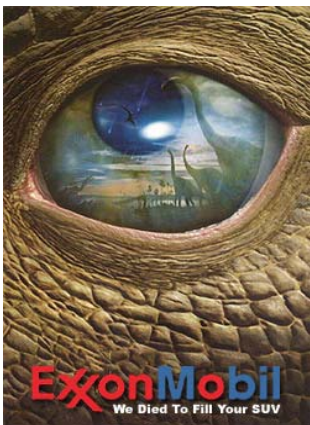




Voice from the Back

Profits And Oily Words

You have seen advertisements by oil companies that express concern for the environment and claim they fight global warming. It is of course a fraud. "Britain's leading scientists have challenged the US oil company ExxonMobil to stop funding groups that attempt to undermine the scientific consensus on climate change. In an unprecedented step, the Royal Society, Britain premier scientific academy, has written to the oil giant to demand that the company withdraws support for dozens of groups that have "misrepresented the



science of climate change by outright denial of the evidence." (Guardian, 20 September) Capitalists are only interested in profits, they don't give a damn about your children or their children's

future. That is capitalism.

A Toxic Society

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimate at least 90,000 people die every year of asbestos related diseases but that didn't stop the manufacture of the obnoxious material. "Chrysotile asbestos, a known human carcinogen, will remain off a global "watch list" of toxic substances for at least two more years after countries led by Canada blocked consensus in United Nations talks on Friday. ... Canada, whose French-speaking Quebec province is a major asbestos producer and exporter, led opposition to its addition to the list, according to environmentalists tracking the talks. Canadian officials say putting chrysotile asbestos on the list would be tantamount to banning international trade in it and threaten jobs." (Yahoo! News, 13 October) 90,000 deaths a year is a mere inconvenience compared to a couple of bucks for the owning class who make

their money from death and disease. That is why we are socialists, also some of us once worked in shipyards, where they used asbestos, and we have difficulty breathing.

Cut Price Killers

"BP, the British oil group, had a "checkbox mentality" towards safety and was aware of maintenance backlogs and unsafe equipment at its Texas City refinery years before the fire there in 2005 in which 15 workers died, according to findings from US safety officials. ... Safety was compromised by a succession of budget cuts ... The company implemented a 25 per cent cut on fixed costs between 1998 and 2000 which adversely affected maintenance expenditure at the refinery." (Times, 31 October) In order to compete inside capitalism firms are constantly trying to cut overheads. In this case leading to the death and injury of many



The Texas City refinery fire

workers. That is how capitalism operates. Nasty aint it?

Gangster Talk

The recent electoral losses of the Republican Party in the USA have led to the Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld quitting his post. His political demise led to newspapers running articles on him. Here are a couple of his past statements that were quoted. "Death has a tendency to encourage a depressing view of war" and "You get a lot more with a kind word and a gun than you do with a kind word alone." (Times, 9 November) It is significant that this last statement of Rumsfeld was a quote from the gangster Al Capone. We can understand why a US Defence Secretary would have admired a

murderous gangster chief, after all they both lived in a capitalist society based on violence.

Bull In A China Shop

The media mogul Rupert Murdoch has been making strenuous efforts to break in to the Chinese market, but in 1993 he made a mess of it by stating, "Advances in the technology of telecommunications are an unambiguous threat to totalitarian regimes everywhere." The Chinese took this threat seriously and imposed strict rules on satellite dishes thus depriving Murdoch's Star TV of the huge Chinese potential audience. "The following year Star removed BBC World Television from its Chinese service, in a move that was regarded by many as a sop to the Chinese government." (Observer, 12 November) Last month Murdoch was in China trying to sweet talk his way in with government officials. When it comes to making money democratic views take a back seat with capitalists like Murdoch. What is suppression of political ideas, imprisonment, torture and death compared with more money to a



billionaire? Very little it seems.

An American Myth

Supporters of the profit system often site the USA as a good example of how democratic capitalism really is. They give us the old homily about "log cabin to White House" although today it should probably be "trailer park to White House". It is of course a complete fallacy as the following item about the recent mid-term election illustrates. "This election proved that it pays to spend big(ger). The average House winner burned through about \$1 million on the stump - and the candidate who spent the most won in 93% of House races. The most expensive victory was, oddly, one of the Dems' safe bets: New York Senator Hillary Clinton, who won a second term with 67% of the vote - and \$35.9 million." (Time, 20 November) Forget the myths, for a lot of Americans it is "trailer park to trailer park."

Free Lunch



by Rigg